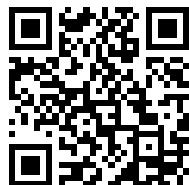
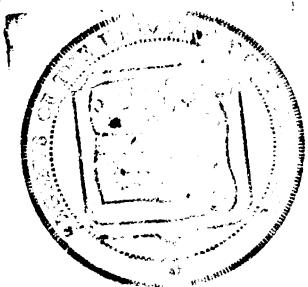

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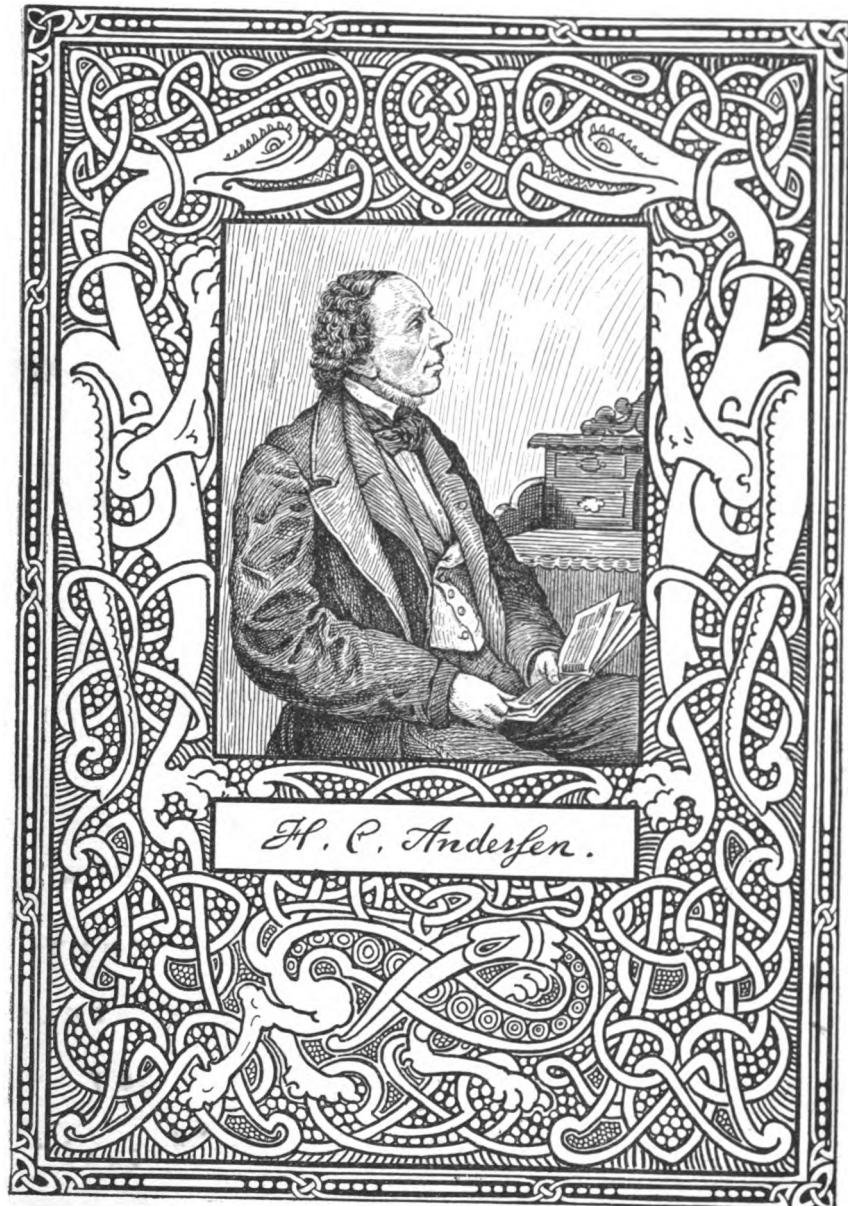


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HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES AND WONDER STORIES

WITH OVER
ONE HUNDRED
ILLUSTRATIONS
AND DECORATIONS

By

LOUIS RHEAD

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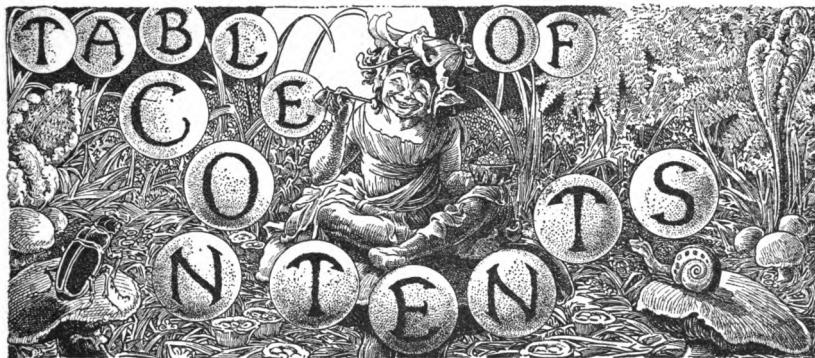
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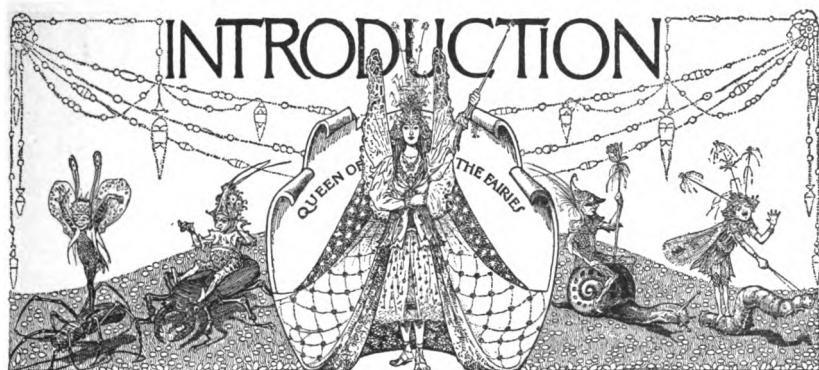
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NEVER has a beautiful talent needed an introduction less than Hans Christian Andersen from the sort of glibness which is asked to officiate in that way at lectures and public meetings and in the forefront of books. Every one knows who this gentle Dane was, and almost every one knows what he did. Every one especially knows what he did here in this book, so that the index is about all that is needed for the fathers and grandfathers and mothers and grandmothers. The mere names of the stories tell the stories to those old children who learned them by heart long ago. The Ugly Duckling, The Ice-Maiden, Soup Made out of a Sausage-stick, The Constant Tin Soldier, The Red Shoes, Thumbling, The Emperor's New Clothes, The Girl Who trod on Bread: what more do *we* want than the names of the thirty-five other stories in the book? But if the young children insist upon having them told again as Andersen alone knew how to tell stories, why here they are, with pictures to them that repeat them with a like sweet fancifulness.

I suppose there never were stories with so little harm in them, so much good. Each of them has a moral, but so neatly tucked away that it does not stick out at the end as morals usually do, particularly in stories meant for children, but is mostly imparted with the sort of gay wisdom which a friendly grown-up uses with the children when they do not know whether he is funning or not. The great beauty of them is the homely tenderness which they are full of, the kind of hospitality which welcomes all sorts and conditions of children to the same intimacy. They are of a sim-

INTRODUCTION

plicity always so refined that there is no touch of coarseness in them; with their perfect naturalness they are of a delicate artistry which will take the young children unaware of its perfection, and will only steal into their consciousness perhaps when they are very old children. Some may never live to feel the art, but they will feel the naturalness at once.

How wholesome, how good, how true, how lovely! That is what I think, when I think of any of Andersen's stories, but perhaps I think it most when I read *The Ugly Duckling*, which is the allegory of his own life, finding its way to fame and honor through many kinds of difficulty and discouragement from others and from the consequences of his own defects and foibles. Nobody could have written those benignant fables, those loving parables, who had not suffered from impatience and misunderstanding such as Andersen exaggerates in his autobiography and travesties in that story; and his rise to good will above the snubs and hurts which he somewhat too plaintively records is as touching a thing as I know in literary history. His sole revenge takes in that sweet satire, and it is no great excess after owning himself an ugly duckling if he comes at last to see himself a swan. He was indeed a swan as compared with most ducklings that grow up to the ordinary proportions of ducks from their humble origin, but I do not care if in his own nature and evolution he did not always get beyond a goose. There are many ugly ducklings who do not get as far as being geese, and I mean what I say for high praise of our poet. Swans are magnificent birds, and as long as they keep in the water or the sky they are superbly graceful, with necks that curve beyond anything, but they are of no more use in the world than eagles; they have very bad tempers, and they bite abominably, and strike with their wings with force to break a man's bones, so that I would have ugly ducklings mostly stop short of becoming swans.

But here I am, trying to put a moral in the poet's mouth, not reflecting that a moral is the last thing he means in his fairy tales and wonder stories. They are of a witchery far beyond sermoning, in that quaint humor, that subtle suggestion, that

INTRODUCTION

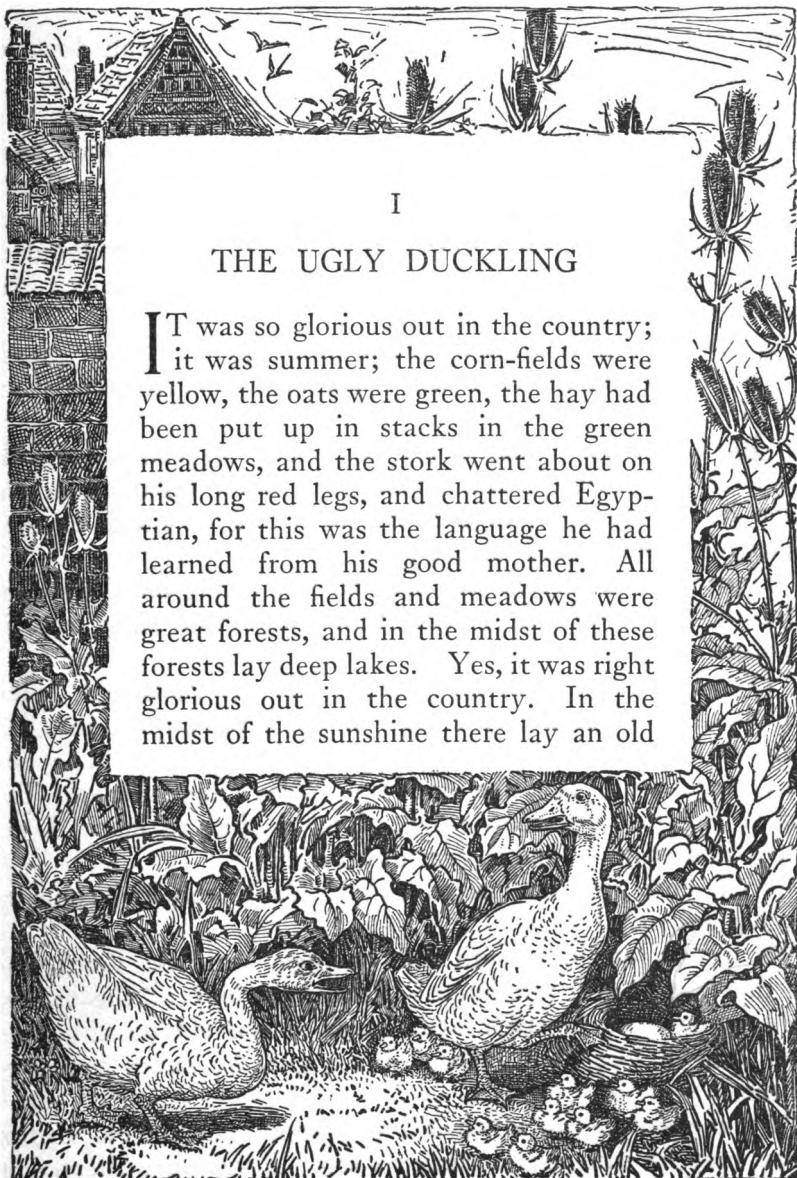
fidelity to what we know of ourselves, of our small passions and vanities and follies as young children and our full-sized faults as old ones. You might go through them all with no more sense of instruction, if you pleased, than you would feel in walking out in a pleasant country, with here and there a friendly homestead, flocks grazing, and boys and girls playing. But perhaps such a scene, such a mild experience, makes one think as well as a direct appeal to one's reason or conscience. The children, however, need not be afraid. I think I could safely assure the worst of them (and how much better the worst of them are than the best of us!) that they can get back to themselves from this book, for the present at least, with no more trouble of spirit, if they choose, than if they had been reading the Arabian Nights. Long afterward it may be that, when they have forgotten many Arabian Nights, something will come to them out of a dim memory of these fairy tales and wonder stories, and they will realize that our dear Hans Christian Andersen meant so and so for their souls' good when he seemed to be merely amusing them. I hope so.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

I

THE UGLY DUCKLING

IT was so glorious out in the country; it was summer; the corn-fields were yellow, the oats were green, the hay had been put up in stacks in the green meadows, and the stork went about on his long red legs, and chattered Egyptian, for this was the language he had learned from his good mother. All around the fields and meadows were great forests, and in the midst of these forests lay deep lakes. Yes, it was right glorious out in the country. In the midst of the sunshine there lay an old



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farm, with deep canals about it, and from the wall down to the water grew great burdocks, so high that little children could stand upright under the loftiest of them. It was just as wild there as in the deepest wood, and here sat a Duck upon her nest; she had to hatch her ducklings; but she was almost tired out before the little ones came; and then she so seldom had visitors. The other ducks liked better to swim about in the canals than to run up to sit down under a burdock and cackle with her.

At last one egg-shell after another burst open. "Piep! piep!" it cried, and in all the eggs there were little creatures that stuck out their heads.

"Quack! quack!" they said; and they all came quacking out as fast as they could, looking all round them under the green leaves; and the mother let them look as much as they chose, for green is good for the eye.

"How wide the world is!" said all the young ones, for they certainly had much more room now than when they were in the eggs.

"D'ye think this is all the world?" said the mother. "That stretches far across the other side of the garden, quite into the parson's field; but I have never been there yet. I hope you are all together." And she stood up. "No, I have not all. The largest egg still lies there. How long is that to last? I am really tired of it." And she sat down again.

"Well, how goes it?" asked an old Duck who had come to pay her a visit.

"It lasts a long time with that one egg," said the Duck who sat there. "It will not burst. Now, only look at the others; are they not the prettiest little ducks one could possibly see? They are all like their father: the rogue, he never comes to see me."

"Let me see the egg which will not burst," said the old visitor. "You may be sure it is a turkey's egg. I was once cheated in that way, and had much anxiety and trouble with the young ones, for they are afraid of the water. Must I say it to you, I

FAIRY TALES

could not get them to venture in. I quacked and I clacked, but it was no use. Let me see the egg. Yes, that's a turkey's egg. Let it lie there, and teach the other children to swim."

"I think I will sit on it a little longer," said the Duck. "I've sat so long now that I can sit a few days more."

"Just as you please," said the old Duck; and she went away.

At last the great egg burst. "Piep! piep!" said the little one, and crept forth. It was very large and very ugly. The Duck looked at it.

"It's a very large duckling," said she; "none of the others look like that: can it really be a turkey chick? Well, we shall soon find out. It must go into the water, even if I have to thrust it in myself."

The next day it was bright, beautiful weather; the sun shone on all the green trees. The Mother Duck went down to the canal with all her family. Splash! she jumped into the water. "Quack! quack!" she said; and one duckling after another plunged in. The water closed over their heads, but they came up in an instant and swam capitally; their legs went of themselves, and they were all in the water. The ugly gray Duckling swam with them.

"No, it's not a turkey," said she; "look how well it can use its legs and how straight it holds itself. It is my own child! On the whole, it's quite pretty, if one looks at it rightly. Quack! quack! come with me, and I'll lead you out into the great world and present you in the duck-yard; but keep close to me, so that no one may tread on you, and take care of the cats!"

And so they came into the duck-yard. There was a terrible riot going on in there, for two families were quarreling about an eel's head, and the cat got it after all.

"See, that's how it goes in the world!" said the Mother Duck; and she whetted her beak, for she too wanted the eel's head. "Only use your legs," she said. "See that you can bustle about, and bow your heads before the old Duck yonder. She's the grandest of all here; she's of Spanish blood—that's why she's so fat; and—d'ye see?—she has a red rag round her

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leg; that's something particularly fine, and the greatest distinction a duck can enjoy: it signifies that one does not want to lose her, and that she's to be known by the animals and by men too. Shake yourselves—don't turn in your toes; a well-brought-up duck turns its toes quite out, just like father and mother—so! Now bend your necks and say, 'Quack!'

And they did so: but the other ducks round about looked at them and said quite boldly:

"Look there! Now we're to have these hanging on, as if there were not enough of us already! And—fie!—how that Duckling yonder looks! We won't stand that!" And one duck flew up at it and bit it in the neck.

"Let it alone," said the mother; "it does no harm to any one."

"Yes, but it's too large and peculiar," said the Duck who had bitten it; "and therefore it must be put down."

"Those are pretty children that the mother has there," said the old Duck with the rag round her leg. "They're all pretty but that one; that was rather unlucky. I wish she could bear it over again."

"That cannot be done, my lady," replied the Mother Duck. "It is not pretty, but it has a really good disposition, and swims as well as any other; yes, I may even say it swims better. I think it will grow up pretty and become smaller in time; it has lain too long in the egg, and therefore is not properly shaped." And then she pinched it in the neck and smoothed its feathers. "Moreover, it is a drake," she said, "and therefore it is not of so much consequence. I think he will be very strong: he makes his way already."

"The other ducklings are graceful enough," said the old Duck. "Make yourself at home; and if you find an eel's head you may bring it me."

And now they were at home. But the poor Duckling which had crept last out of the egg, and looked so ugly, was bitten and pushed and jeered, as much by the ducks as by the chickens.

"It is too big!" they all said. And the turkey cock, who had been born with spurs, and therefore thought himself an

BLEW HIMSELF UP LIKE A SHIP IN FULL SAIL



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emperor, blew himself up like a ship in full sail, and bore straight down upon it; then he gobbled and grew quite red in the face. The poor Duckling did not know where it should stand or walk; it was quite melancholy because it looked ugly and was the butt of the whole duck-yard.

So it went on the first day; and afterward it became worse and worse. The poor Duckling was hunted about by every one; even its brothers and sisters were quite angry with it, and said, "If the cat would only catch you, you ugly creature!" And the mother said, "If you were only far away!" And the ducks bit it, and the chickens beat it, and the girl who had to feed the poultry kicked at it with her foot.

Then it ran and flew over the fence, and the little birds in the bushes flew up in fear.

"That is because I am so ugly!" thought the Duckling; and it shut its eyes, but flew on farther; and so it came out into the great moor, where the wild ducks lived. Here it lay the whole night long; and it was weary and downcast.

Toward morning the wild ducks flew up and looked at their new companion.

"What sort of a one are you?" they asked; and the Duckling turned in every direction and bowed as well as it could. "You are remarkably ugly!" said the wild ducks. "But that is nothing to us, so long as you do not marry into our family."

Poor thing! it certainly did not think of marrying, and only hoped to obtain leave to lie among the reeds and drink some of the swamp-water.

Thus it lay two whole days; then came thither two wild geese, or, properly speaking, two wild ganders. It was not long since each had crept out of an egg, and that's why they were so saucy.

"Listen, comrade," said one of them. "You're so ugly that I like you. Will you go with us and become a bird of passage? Near here, in another moor, there are a few sweet, lovely wild geese, all unmarried, and all able to say 'Rap!' You've a chance of making your fortune, ugly as you are."

HANS ANDERSEN'S

"Piff! paff!" resounded through the air; and the two ganders fell down dead in the swamp, and the water became blood-red. "Piff! paff!" it sounded again, and the whole flock of wild geese rose up from the reeds. And then there was another report. A great hunt was going on. The sportsmen were lying in wait all round the moor, and some were even sitting up in the branches of the trees, which spread far over the reeds. The blue smoke rose up like clouds among the dark trees, and was wafted far away across the water; and the hunting-dogs came—splash, splash!—into the swamp, and the rushes and the reeds bent down on every side. That was a fright for the poor Duckling! It turned its head and put it under its wing; but at that moment a frightful great dog stood close by the Duckling. His tongue hung far out of his mouth, and his eyes gleamed horrible and ugly; he thrust out his nose close against the Duckling, showed his sharp teeth, and—splash, splash!—on he went, without seizing it.

"O, Heaven be thanked!" sighed the Duckling. "I am so ugly that even the dog does not like to bite me!"

And so it lay quite quiet while the shots rattled through the reeds and gun after gun was fired. At last, late in the day, all was still; but the poor Duckling did not dare to rise up; it waited several hours before it looked round, and then hastened away out of the moor as fast as it could. It ran on over field and meadow; there was such a storm raging that it was difficult to get from one place to another.

Toward evening the Duck came to a little miserable peasant's hut. This hut was so dilapidated that it did not itself know on which side it should fall; and that's why it remained standing. The storm whistled round the Duckling in such a way that the poor creature was obliged to sit down to stand against it; and the wind blew worse and worse. Then the Duckling noticed that one of the hinges of the door had given way, and the door hung so slanting that the Duckling could slip through the crack into the room; and that is what it did.

Here lived a woman with her Cat and her Hen. And the Cat, whom she called Sonnie, could arch his back and purr;

FAIRY TALES

he could even give out sparks; but for that one had to stroke his fur the wrong way. The Hen had quite little short legs, and therefore she was called Chickabiddy Shortshanks; she laid good eggs; and the woman loved her as her own child.

In the morning the strange Duckling was at once noticed, and the Cat began to purr and the Hen to cluck.

“What’s this?” said the woman, and looked all round, but she could not see well, and therefore she thought the Duckling was a fat duck that had strayed. “This is a rare prize!” she said. “Now I shall have duck’s eggs. I hope it is not a drake. We must try that.”

And so the Duckling was admitted on trial for three weeks; but no eggs came. And the Cat was master of the house, and the Hen was the lady, and always said, “We and the world!” for she thought they were half the world, and by far the better half. The Duckling thought one might have a different opinion, but the Hen would not allow it.

“Can you lay eggs?” she asked.

“No.”

“Then will you hold your tongue!”

And the Cat said, “Can you curve your back and purr and give out sparks?”

“No.”

“Then you will please have no opinion of your own when sensible folks are speaking.”

And the Duckling sat in a corner and was melancholy; then the fresh air and the sunshine streamed in, and it was seized with such a strange longing to swim on the water that it could not help telling the Hen of it.

“What are you thinking of?” cried the Hen. “You have nothing to do, that’s why you have these fancies. Lay eggs or purr, and they will pass over.”

“But it is so charming to swim on the water,” said the Duckling, “so refreshing to let it close above one’s head and to dive down to the bottom!”

“Yes, that must be a mighty pleasure, truly,” quoth the

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Hen. "I fancy you must have gone crazy. Ask the Cat about it—he's the cleverest animal I know—ask him if he likes to swim on the water or to dive down; I won't speak about myself. Ask our mistress, the old woman; no one in the world is cleverer than she. Do you think she has any desire to swim, and to let the water close above her head?"

"You don't understand me," said the Duckling.

"We don't understand you? Then pray who is to understand you? You surely don't pretend to be cleverer than the Cat and the woman—I won't say anything of myself. Don't be conceited, child, and thank your Maker for all the kindness you have received. Did you not get into a warm room, and have you not fallen into company from which you may learn something? But you are a chatterer, and it is not pleasant to associate with you. You may believe me, I speak for your good. I tell you disagreeable things, and by that one may always know one's true friends! Only take care that you learn to lay eggs, or to purr, and give out sparks!"

"I think I will go out into the wide world," said the Duckling.

"Yes, do go," replied the Hen.

And so the Duckling went away. It swam on the water, and dived, but it was slighted by every creature because of its ugliness.

Now came the autumn. The leaves in the forest turned yellow and brown; the wind caught them so that they danced about, and up in the air it was very cold. The clouds hung low, heavy with hail and snowflakes, and on the fence stood the raven, crying, "Croak! croak!" for mere cold; yes, it was enough to make one feel cold to think of this. The poor little Duckling certainly had not a good time. One evening—the sun was just setting in his beauty—there came a whole flock of great, handsome birds out of the bushes; they were dazzlingly white, with long, flexible necks; they were swans. They uttered a very peculiar cry, spread forth their glorious great wings, and flew away from that cold region to warmer lands, to fair open lakes. They mounted so high, so high! and the ugly Duckling felt quite strangely as it watched them. It



IN THE MORNING THE STRANGE DUCKLING WAS AT ONCE NOTICED

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turned round and round in the water like a wheel, stretched out its neck toward them, and uttered such a strange, loud cry as frightened itself. Oh, it could not forget those beautiful, happy birds; and so soon as it could see them no longer it dived down to the very bottom, and when it came up again it was quite beside itself. It knew not the name of those birds, and knew not whether they were flying; but it loved them more than it had ever loved any one. It was not at all envious of them. How could it think of wishing to possess such loveliness as they had? It would have been glad if only the ducks would have endured its company—the poor, ugly creature!

And the winter grew cold, very cold! The Duckling was forced to swim about in the water to prevent the surface from freezing entirely; but every night the hole in which it swam about became smaller and smaller. It froze so hard that the icy covering crackled again; and the Duckling was obliged to use its legs continually to prevent the hole from freezing up. At last it became exhausted, and lay quite still, and thus froze fast into the ice.

Early in the morning a peasant came by, and when he saw what had happened he took his wooden shoe, broke the ice-crust to pieces, and carried the Duckling home to his wife. Then it came to itself again. The children wanted to play with it; but the Duckling thought they wanted to hurt it, and in its terror fluttered up into the milk-pan, so that the milk spurted down into the room. The woman clasped her hands, at which the Duckling flew down into the butter-tub, and then into the meal-barrel and out again. How it looked then! The woman screamed and struck at it with the fire-tongs; the children tumbled over one another in their efforts to catch the Duckling; and they laughed and they screamed!—well it was that the door stood open, and the poor creature was able to slip out between the shrubs into the newly fallen snow—there it lay quite exhausted.

But it would be too melancholy if I were to tell all the misery

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and care which the Duckling had to endure in the hard winter. It lay out on the moor among the reeds, when the sun began to shine again and the larks to sing: it was a beautiful spring.

Then all at once the Duckling could flap its wings: they beat the air more strongly than before and bore it strongly away; and before it well knew how all this happened it found itself in a great garden, where the elder-trees smelt sweet and bent their long green branches down to the canal that wound through the region. Oh, here it was so beautiful, such a gladness of spring! and from the thicket came three glorious white swans; they rustled their wings, and swam lightly on the water. The Duckling knew the splendid creatures, and felt oppressed by a peculiar sadness.

"I will fly away to them, to the royal birds! and they will beat me because I, that am so ugly, dare to come near them. But it is all the same. Better to be killed by *them* than to be pursued by ducks and beaten by fowls and pushed about by the girl who takes care of the poultry-yard, and to suffer hunger in winter!" And it flew out into the water, and swam toward the beautiful swans: these looked at it and came sailing down upon it with outspread wings. "Kill me!" said the poor creature, and bent its head down upon the water, expecting nothing but death. But what was this that it saw in the clear water? It beheld its own image; and, lo! it was no longer a clumsy dark-gray bird, ugly and hateful to look at, but a—swan!

It matters nothing if one is born in a duck-yard if one has only lain in a swan's egg.

It felt quite glad at all the need and misfortune it had suffered, now it realized its happiness in all the splendor that surrounded it. And the great swans swam round it and stroked it with their beaks.

Into the garden came little children who threw bread and corn into the water; and the youngest cried, "There is a new one!" and the other children shouted, joyously, "Yes, a new one has arrived!" And they clapped their hands and danced about, and ran to their father and mother; and bread and cake

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were thrown into the water; and they all said, "The new one is the most beautiful of all! so young and handsome!" and the old swans bowed their heads before him.

Then he felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings, for he did not know what to do; he was so happy, and yet not at all proud. He thought how he had been persecuted and despised; and now he heard them saying that he was the most beautiful of all birds. Even the elder-tree bent its branches straight down into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and mild. Then his wings rustled, he lifted his slender neck, and cried rejoicingly from the depths of his heart:

"I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was the ugly Duckling!"





II

THE SWINEHERD

THREE was once a poor Prince; he had a kingdom that was very small; still it was quite large enough to marry upon; and he wished to marry.

It was certainly rather cool of him to say to the Emperor's daughter, "Will you have me?" But so he did, for his name was renowned far and wide, and there were a hundred princesses who would have answered, "Thank you." But see what she said. Now we will hear.

By the grave of the Prince's father there grew a rose-tree—a most beautiful rose-tree; it blossomed only once in every five years, and even then bore only one flower, but that was a rose that smelt so sweet as to make one forget all cares and sorrows.

And furthermore, the Prince had a Nightingale, who could sing in such a manner that it seemed as though all sweet melodies dwelt in her little throat. So the Princess was to have the rose and the nightingale; and they were accordingly put into large silver caskets, and sent to her.

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The Emperor had them brought into a large hall, where the Princess was playing at “making calls,” with the ladies of the court; they never did anything else, and when she saw the caskets with the presents she clapped her hands for joy.

“Ah, if it were but a little pussy-cat!” exclaimed she; then out came the beautiful rose.

“Oh, how prettily it is made!” said all the court ladies.

“It is more than pretty,” said the Emperor; “it is charming!”

But the Princess touched it, and was almost ready to cry.

“Fie, papa!” said she; “it is not made at all; it is natural!”

“Fie!” cried all the court ladies; “it is natural!”

“Let us see what is in the other casket, before we get into a bad humor,” proposed the Emperor. So the Nightingale came forth, and sang so delightfully that at first no one could say anything ill-humored of it.

“*Superbe! charmant!*” exclaimed the ladies; for they all used to chatter French, each one worse than her neighbor.

“How much the bird reminds me of the musical box that belonged to our blessed Empress!” remarked an old knight. “Ah yes! it is the very same tone, the same execution.”

“Yes! yes!” said the Emperor, and he wept like a little child.

“I will still hope that it is not a real bird,” said the Princess.

“Yet it is a real bird,” said those who had brought it.

“Well, then let the bird fly,” returned the Princess; and she positively refused to see the Prince.

However, he was not to be discouraged; he daubed his face over brown and black, pulled his cap over his ears, and knocked at the door.

“Good day, Emperor!” said he. “Can I have employment at the palace?”

“Oh, there are so many that want a place!” said the Emperor.

“Well, let me see; I want some one to take care of the pigs, for we have a great many of them.”

So the Prince was appointed “Imperial Swineherd.” He had a dirty little room close by the pigsty; and there he sat the whole day and worked. By the evening he had made a

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pretty little saucepan. Little bells were hung all around it; and when the pot was boiling these bells tinkled in the most charming manner and played the old melody:

Ah! thou dearest Augustine!
All is gone, gone, gone!

But what was still more curious, whoever held his finger in the smoke of this saucepan immediately smelt all the dishes that were cooking on every hearth in the city: this, you see, was something quite different from the rose.

Now the Princess happened to walk that way; and when she heard the tune she stood quite still and seemed pleased, for she could play "Dearest Augustine"; it was the only piece she knew, and she played it with one finger.

"Why, there is my piece!" said the Princess; "that Swineherd must certainly have been well educated! Here! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument."

And so one of the court ladies must run in; however, she drew on wooden slippers first.

"What will you take for the saucepan?" inquired the lady.

"I will have ten kisses from the Princess," said the Swineherd.

"Mercy on us!" said the lady.

"Yes, I cannot sell it for less," said the Swineherd.

"Well, what does he say?" asked the Princess.

"I cannot tell you, really," replied the lady; "it is too bad!"

"Then you can whisper it!" So the lady whispered it.

"He is an impudent fellow!" said the Princess, and she walked on; but when she had gone a little way, the bells tinkled so prettily:

Ah! thou dearest Augustine!
All is gone, gone, gone!

"Stay," said the Princess. "Ask him if he will have ten kisses from the ladies of my court."

"No, thank you!" answered the Swineherd: "ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep the saucepan myself."

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“That must not be, either,” said the Princess; “but do you all stand before me, that no one may see us.”

And the court ladies placed themselves in front of her and spread out their dresses; and so the Swineherd got ten kisses, and she got the saucepan.

It was delightful! The saucepan was kept boiling all the evening and the whole of the following day. They knew perfectly well what was cooking at every fire throughout the city, from the chamberlain’s to the cobbler’s; the court ladies danced and clapped their hands.

“We know who has soup and who has pancakes for dinner to-day; who has cutlets and who has eggs. How interesting!”

And “How interesting!” said the Lord Steward’s wife.

“Yes, but keep my secret, for I am an emperor’s daughter.”

“Mercy on us!” said they all.

The Swineherd—that is to say the Prince, for no one knew that he was other than an ill-favored swineherd—let not a day pass without working at something; he at last constructed a rattle which, when it was swung round, played all the waltzes and jig-tunes which have ever been heard since the creation of the world.

“Ah, that is *superbe!*” said the Princess, when she passed by. “I have never heard prettier compositions. Go in and ask him the price of the instrument—but I won’t kiss him!”

“He will have a hundred kisses from the Princess!” said the court lady who had been in to ask.

“I think he is crazy!” said the Princess, and walked on; but when she had gone a little way she stopped again. “One must encourage art,” said she. “I am the Emperor’s daughter. Tell him he shall, as on yesterday, have ten kisses from me, and may take the rest from the ladies of the court.”

“Oh, but we should not like that at all!” said the court ladies.

“What are you muttering?” asked the Princess. “If I can

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kiss him, surely you can! Remember, I give you your food and wages." So the court ladies were obliged to go to him again.

"A hundred kisses from the Princess!" said he, "or else let every one keep his own."

"Stand round!" said she; and all the ladies stood round her whilst the kissing was going on.

"What can be the reason for such a crowd close by the pigsty?" said the Emperor, who happened just then to step out on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes and put on his spectacles. "They are the ladies of the court; there is some play going on. I must go down and see what they are about!" So he pulled up his slippers at the heel, for he had trodden them down.

Heh, there! What a hurry he is in!

As soon as he had got into the courtyard he moved very softly, and the ladies were so much engrossed with counting the kisses, that all might go on fairly, that they did not perceive the Emperor. He rose on his tiptoes.

"What is all this?" said he, when he saw what was going on, and he boxed the Princess's ears with his slipper, just as the Swineherd was taking the eighty-sixth kiss.

"Off with you!" cried the Emperor, for he was very angry; and both Princess and Swineherd were thrust out of the city.

The Princess now stood and wept, the Swineherd scolded, and the rain poured down.

"Oh, how miserable I am!" said the Princess. "If I had but married the handsome young Prince! Ah, how unfortunate I am!"

And the Swineherd went behind a tree, washed the black-and-brown color from his face, threw off his dirty clothes, and stepped forth in his princely robes; he looked so noble that the Princess could not help bowing before him.

"I am come to despise thee," said he. "Thou wouldst not have an honorable prince! thou couldst not prize the rose and

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the nightingale, but thou wast ready to kiss the Swineherd for the sake of a trumpery plaything. Now thou hast thy deserts!"

He then went back to his own little kingdom, and shut the door of his palace in her face. Now she might well sing:

Ah! thou dearest Augustine!
All is gone, gone, gone!





III

THE SNOW-QUEEN

FIRST STORY

Which treats of a Mirror and of the Splinters

NOW, then, let us begin. When we are at the end of the story we shall know more than we know now: but to begin.

Once upon a time there was a wicked Sprite; indeed, he was the most mischievous of all sprites. One day he was in a very good humor, for he had made a mirror with the power of causing all that was good and beautiful, when it was reflected therein, to look poor and mean; but that which was good for nothing and looked ugly was shown magnified and increased in ugliness.

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ness. In this mirror the most beautiful landscapes looked like boiled spinach, and the best persons were turned into frights, or appeared to stand on their heads; their faces were so distorted that they were not to be recognized; and if any one had a mole, you might be sure that it would be magnified and spread over both nose and mouth. "That's glorious fun!" said the Sprite. If a good thought passed through a man's mind, then a grin was seen in the mirror, and the Sprite laughed heartily at his clever discovery. All the little sprites who went to his school—for he kept a sprite-school—told one another that a miracle had happened; and that now only, as they thought, it would be possible to see how the world really looked. They ran about with the mirror, and at last there was not a land or a person who was not represented distorted in the mirror. So then they thought they would fly up to the sky, and have a joke there. The higher they flew with the mirror the more terribly it grinned; they could hardly hold it fast. Higher and higher still they flew, nearer and nearer to the stars, when suddenly the mirror shook so terribly with grinning, that it flew out of their hands and fell to the earth, where it was dashed in a hundred million and more pieces. And now it worked much more evil than before, for some of these pieces were hardly so large as a grain of sand, and they flew about in the wide world, and when they got into people's eyes, there they stayed; and then people saw everything perverted, or only had an eye for that which was evil. This happened because the very smallest bit had the same power which the whole mirror had possessed. Some persons even got a splinter in their heart, and then it made one shudder, for their heart became like a lump of ice. Some of the broken pieces were so large that they were used for window-panes, through which one could not see one's friends. Other pieces were put in spectacles; and that was a sad affair when people put on their glasses to see well and rightly. Then the wicked Sprite laughed till he almost choked, for all this tickled his fancy. The fine splinters still flew about in the air: and now we shall hear what happened next.

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SECOND STORY

A Little Boy and a Little Girl

In a large town, where there are so many houses and so many people that there is no room left for everybody to have a little garden, and where, on this account, most persons are obliged to content themselves with flowers in pots, there lived two little children who had a garden somewhat larger than a flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, but they cared for each other as much as if they were. Their parents lived exactly opposite. They inhabited two garrets; and where the roof of the one house joined that of the other, and the gutter ran along the extreme end of it, there was to each house a small window—one needed only to step over the gutter to get from one window to the other.

The children's parents had large wooden boxes there, in which vegetables for the kitchen were planted, and little rose-trees besides; there was a rose in each box, and they grew splendidly. They now thought of placing the boxes across the gutter, so that they nearly reached from one window to the other, and looked just like two walls of flowers. The tendrils of the peas hung down over the boxes, and the rose-trees shot up long branches, twined around the windows, and then bent toward each other—it was almost like a triumphal arch of foliage and flowers. The boxes were very high, and the children knew that they must not creep over them; so they often obtained permission to get out of the windows to each other, and to sit on their little stools among the roses, where they could play delightfully. In winter there was an end of this pleasure. The windows were often frozen over; but then they heated copper farthings on the stove and laid the hot farthing on the window-pane, and then they had a capital peep-hole, quite nicely rounded; and out of each peeped a gentle, friendly eye—it was the little boy and the little girl who were looking out. His name was Kay, hers was Gerda. In summer, with one jump, they could

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get to each other; but in winter they were obliged first to go down the long stairs and then up the long stairs again: and out-of-doors there was quite a snow-storm.

"It is the white bees that are swarming," said Kay's old grandmother.

"Do the white bees choose a queen?" asked the little boy, for he knew that the honey-bees always have one.

"Yes," said the grandmother; "she flies where the swarm hangs in the thickest clusters. She is the largest of all; and she can never remain quietly on the earth, but goes up again into the black clouds. Many a winter's night she flies through the streets of the town and peeps in at the windows, and they then freeze in so wondrous a manner that they look like flowers."

"Yes, I have seen it," said both the children; and so they knew that it was true.

"Can the Snow-queen come in?" said the little girl.

"Only let her come in!" said the little boy; "then I'd put her on the stove, and she'd melt."

And then his grandmother patted his head and told him other stories.

In the evening, when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he climbed up on the chair by the window and peeped out of the little hole. A few snowflakes were falling, and one, the largest of all, remained lying on the edge of a flower-pot. The flake of snow grew larger and larger, and at last it was like a young lady, dressed in the finest white gauze, made of a million little flakes, like stars. She was so beautiful and delicate, but she was of ice, of dazzling, sparkling ice; yet she lived; her eyes gazed fixedly, like two stars; but there was neither quiet nor repose in them. She nodded toward the window and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down from the chair; it seemed to him as if at the same moment a large bird flew past the window.

The next day it was a sharp frost; and then the spring came; the sun shone, the green leaves appeared, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children

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again sat in their pretty garden, high up on the leads at top of the house.

That summer the roses flowered in unwonted beauty. The little girl had learned a hymn in which there was something about roses; and then she thought of her own flowers; and she sang the verse to the little boy, who then sang it with her:

“The rose in the valley is blooming so sweet,
The Child Jesus is there the children to greet.”

And the children held each other by the hand, kissed the roses, looked up at the clear sunshine, and spoke as if they really saw Jesus there. What lovely summer days those were! How delightful to be out in the air, near the fresh rose-bushes, that seemed as if they would never finish blossoming!

Kay and Gerda looked at the picture-book full of beasts and of birds; and it was then—the clock in the church-tower was just striking five—that Kay said, “Oh, I feel such a sharp pain in my heart; and now something has got into my eye!”

The little girl put her arms round his neck. He winked his eyes; now there was nothing to be seen.

“I think it is out now,” said he; but it was not. It was just one of those pieces of glass from the magic mirror that had got into his eye; and poor Kay had got another piece right in his heart. It will soon become like ice. It did not hurt any longer, but there it was.

“What are you crying for?” asked he. “You look so ugly! There's nothing the matter with me. Ah,” said he at once, “that rose is cankered! and look, this one is quite crooked! After all, these roses are very ugly; they are just like the box they are planted in!” And then he gave the box a good kick with his foot and pulled both the roses up.

“What are you doing?” cried the little girl; and as he perceived her fright he pulled up another rose, got in at the window, and hastened off from dear little Gerda.

Afterward, when she brought her picture-book, he asked, “What horrid beasts had she there?” And if his grandmother

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told him stories he always interrupted her; besides, if he could manage it, he would get behind her, put on her spectacles, and imitate her way of speaking: he copied all her ways, and then everybody laughed at him. He was soon able to imitate the gait and manner of every one in the street. Everything that was peculiar and displeasing in them, that Kay knew how to imitate; and at such times all the people said, "The boy is certainly very clever!" But it was the glass he had got in his eye, the glass that was sticking in his heart, which made him tease even little Gerda, whose whole soul was devoted to him.

His games now were quite different from what they had formerly been, they were so very knowing. One winter's day, when the flakes of snow were flying about, he spread the skirts of his blue coat and caught the snow as it fell.

"Look through this glass, Gerda," said he. And every flake seemed larger, and appeared like a magnificent flower or a beautiful star: it was splendid to look at!

"Look, how clever!" said Kay. "That's much more interesting than real flowers. They are as exact as possible; there is not a fault in them, if they did not melt!"

It was not long after this that Kay came one day with large gloves on and his little sledge at his back and bawled right into Gerda's ears, "I have permission to go out into the square, where the others are playing"; and off he was in a moment.

There, in the market-place, some of the boldest of the boys used to tie their sledges to the carts as they passed by, and so they were pulled along and got a good ride. It was so capital! Just as they were in the very height of their amusement a large sledge passed by: it was painted quite white, and there was some one in it wrapped up in a rough white mantle of fur, with a rough white fur cap on his head. The sledge drove round the square twice, and Kay tied on his as quickly as he could, and off he drove with it. On they went quicker and quicker into the next street; and the person who drove turned round to Kay and nodded to him in a friendly manner, just as if they knew each other. Every time he was going to untie his sledge

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the person nodded to him, and then Kay sat quiet; and so on they went till they came outside the gates of the town. Then the snow began to fall so thickly that the little boy could not see an arm's-length before him, but still on he went, when suddenly he let go the string he held in his hand in order to get loose from the sledge, but it was of no use; still the little vehicle rushed on with the quickness of the wind. He then cried as loud as he could, but no one heard him; the snow drifted and the sledge flew on, and sometimes it gave a jerk as though they were driving over hedges and ditches. He was quite frightened, and he tried to repeat the Lord's Prayer; but all he could do, he was only able to remember the multiplication table.

The snowflakes grew larger and larger, till at last they looked just like great white fowls. Suddenly they flew on one side; the large sledge stopped, and the person who drove rose up. It was a lady; her cloak and cap were of snow. She was tall, of slender figure, and of a dazzling whiteness. It was the Snow-queen.

"We have traveled fast," said she, "but it is freezingly cold. Come under my bearskin." And she put him in the sledge beside her, wrapped the fur round him, and he felt as though he were sinking in a snow-wreath.

"Are you still cold?" asked she; and then she kissed his forehead. Ah! it was colder than ice; it penetrated to his very heart, which was already almost a frozen lump; it seemed to him as if he were about to die—but a moment more and it was quite congenial to him, and he did not remark the cold that was around him.

"My sledge! Do not forget my sledge!" It was the first thing he thought of. It was there, tied to one of the white chickens, who flew along with it on his back behind the large sledge. The Snow-queen kissed Kay once more, and then he forgot little Gerda, grandmother, and all whom he had left at his home.

"Now you will have no more kisses," said she, "or else I should kiss you to death!"



“COME UNDER MY BEARSKIN,” SAID THE SNOW-QUEEN

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Kay looked at her. She was very beautiful; a more clever or a more lovely countenance he could not fancy to himself; and she no longer appeared of ice as before, when she sat outside the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was perfect. He did not fear her at all, and told her that he could calculate in his head, and with fractions, even; that he knew the number of square miles there were in the different countries, and how many inhabitants they contained; and she smiled while he spoke. It then seemed to him as if what he knew was not enough, and he looked upward in the large, huge, empty space above him, and on she flew with him—flew high over the black clouds, while the storm moaned and whistled as though it were singing some old tune. On they flew over woods and lakes, over seas and many lands; and beneath them the chilling storm rushed fast, the wolves howled, the snow crackled; above them flew large screaming crows, but higher up appeared the moon, quite large and bright, and it was on it that Kay gazed during the long, long winter's night, while by day he slept at the feet of the Snow-queen.

THIRD STORY

Of the Flower Garden at the Old Woman's Who Understood Witchcraft

BUT what became of little Gerda when Kay did not return? Where could he be? Nobody knew; nobody could give any intelligence. All the boys knew was that they had seen him tie his sledge to another large and splendid one which drove down the street and out of the town. Nobody knew where he was, many sad tears were shed, and little Gerda wept long and bitterly. At last she said he must be dead; that he had been drowned in the river which flowed close to the town. Oh, those were very long and dismal winter evenings!

At last spring came with its warm sunshine.
"Kay is dead and gone!" said little Gerda.

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"That I don't believe," said the Sunshine.

"Kay is dead and gone!" said she to the Swallows.

"That we don't believe," said they, and at last little Gerda did not think so any longer either.

"I'll put on my red shoes," said she, one morning; "Kay has never seen them, and then I'll go down to the river and ask there."

It was quite early; she kissed her old grandmother, who was still asleep, put on her red shoes, and went alone to the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I will make you a present of my red shoes if you will give him back to me."

And, as it seemed to her, the blue waves nodded in a strange manner; then she took off her red shoes, the most precious things she possessed, and threw them both into the river. But they fell close to the bank, and the little waves bore them immediately to land; it was as if the stream would not take what was dearest to her, for in reality it had not got little Kay; but Gerda thought that she had not thrown the shoes out far enough, so she clambered into a boat which lay among the rushes, went to the farthest end, and threw out the shoes. But the boat was not fastened, and the motion which she occasioned made it drift from the shore. She observed this, and hastened to get back; but before she could do so the boat was more than a yard from the land and was gliding quickly onward.

Little Gerda was very much frightened and began to cry; but no one heard her except the Sparrows, and they could not carry her to land; but they flew along the bank and sang as if to comfort her, "Here we are! here we are!" The boat drifted with the stream; little Gerda sat quite still without shoes, for they were swimming behind the boat, but could not reach it because it went much faster than they did.

The banks on both sides were beautiful; lovely flowers, venerable trees, and slopes with sheep and cows, but not a human being was to be seen.

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“Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay,” said she; and then she grew less sad. She rose and looked for many hours at the beautiful green banks. Presently she sailed by a large cherry-orchard where was a little cottage with curious red and blue windows; it was thatched, and before it two wooden soldiers stood sentry and presented arms when any one went past.

Gerda called to them, for she thought they were alive; but they, of course, did not answer. She came close to them, for the stream drifted the boat quite near the land.

Gerda called still louder, and an old woman then came out of the cottage, leaning upon a crooked stick. She had a large broad-brimmed hat on, painted with the most splendid flowers.

“Poor little child!” said the old Woman. “How did you get upon the large rapid river, to be driven about so in the wide world?” And then the old Woman went into the water, caught hold of the boat with her crooked stick, drew it to the bank, and lifted little Gerda out.

And Gerda was so glad to be on dry land again, but she was rather afraid of the strange old Woman.

“But come and tell me who you are and how you came here,” said she.

And Gerda told her all; and the old Woman shook her head and said, “Ahem! ahem!” And when Gerda had told her everything, and asked her if she had not seen little Kay, the old Woman answered that he had not passed there, but he no doubt would come; and she told her not to be cast down, but taste her cherries, and look at her flowers, which were finer than any in a picture-book, each of which could tell a whole story. She then took Gerda by the hand, led her into the little cottage, and locked the door.

The windows were very high up; the glass was red, blue, and green, and the sunlight shone through quite wondrously in all sorts of colors. On the table stood the most exquisite cherries, and Gerda ate as many as she chose, for she had permission to do so. While she was eating, the old Woman combed

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her hair with a golden comb, and her hair curled and shone with a lovely golden color around that sweet little face, which was so round and so like a rose.

"I have often longed for such a dear little girl," said the old Woman. "Now you shall see how well we agree together." And while she combed little Gerda's hair the child forgot her foster-brother Kay more and more, for the old Woman understood magic. But she was no evil being, she only practised witchcraft a little for her own private amusement, and now she wanted very much to keep little Gerda. She therefore went out into the garden and stretched out her crooked stick toward the rose-bushes, which, beautifully as they were blowing, all sank into the earth, and no one could tell where they had stood. The old Woman feared that if Gerda should see the roses she would think of her own, would remember little Kay and run away from her.

She now led Gerda into the flower garden. Oh, what odor and what loveliness was there! Every flower that one could think of, and of every season, stood there in fullest bloom; no picture-book could be gayer or more beautiful. Gerda jumped for joy and played till the sun set behind the tall cherry-tree; she then had a pretty bed, with a red silken coverlet filled with blue violets. She fell asleep, and had as pleasant dreams as ever a queen on her wedding-day.

The next morning she went to play with the flowers in the warm sunshine, and thus passed away a day. Gerda knew every flower; and, numerous as they were, it still seemed to Gerda that one was wanting, though she did not know which. One day, while she was looking at the hat of the old Woman painted with flowers, the most beautiful of them all seemed to her to be a rose. The old Woman had forgotten to take it from her hat when she made the others vanish in the earth. But so it is when one's thoughts are not collected. "What!" said Gerda. "Are there no roses here?" and she ran about amongst the flower-beds and looked and looked, but there was not one to be found. She then sat down and wept, but her hot tears



Louis Rhead

SHE CAUGHT HOLD OF THE BOAT WITH HER CROOKED
STICK

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fell just where a rose-bush had sunk; and when her warm tears watered the ground, the tree shot up suddenly, as fresh and blooming as when it had been swallowed up. Gerda kissed the roses, thought of her own dear roses at home, and with them of little Kay.

"Oh, how long I have stayed!" said the little girl. "I intended to look for Kay! Don't you know where he is?" asked she of the Roses. "Do you think he is dead and gone?"

"Dead he certainly is not," said the Roses. "We have been in the earth, where all the dead are, but Kay was not there."

"Many thanks!" said little Gerda; and she went to the other flowers, looked into their cups, and asked, "Don't you know where little Kay is?"

But every flower stood in the sunshine, and dreamed its own fairy tale or its own story; and they all told her very many things, but not one knew anything of Kay..

Well, what did the Tiger-lily say?

"Hearest thou not the drum? Bum! bum! those are the only two tones. Always bum! bum! Hark to the plaintive song of the old woman! to the call of the priests! The Hindu woman in her long robe stands upon the funeral pile; the flames rise around her and her dead husband, but the Hindu woman thinks on the living one in the surrounding circle; on him whose eyes burn hotter than the flames—on him, the fire of whose eyes pierces her heart more than the flames which soon will burn her body to ashes. Can the heart's flame die in the flame of the funeral pile?"

"I don't understand that at all," said little Gerda.

"That is my story," said the Lily.

What did the Convolvulus say?

"Projecting over a narrow mountain-path there hangs an old feudal castle. Thick evergreens grow on the dilapidated walls and around the altar, where a lovely maiden is standing; she bends over the railing and looks out upon the rose. No fresher rose hangs on the branches than she; no apple-blossom

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carried away by the wind is more buoyant! How her splendid silken robe is rustling!

“Is he not yet come?”

“Is it Kay that you mean?” asked little Gerda.

“I am speaking about my story—about my dream,” answered the Convolvulus.

What did the Snowdrops say?

“Between the trees a long board is hanging—it is a swing. Two little girls are sitting in it, and swing themselves backward and forward; their frocks are as white as snow, and long green-silk ribbons flutter from their bonnets. Their brother, who is older than they are, stands up in the swing; he twines his arms around the cords to hold himself fast, for in one hand he has a little cup and in the other a clay pipe. He is blowing soap-bubbles. The swing moves, and the bubbles float in charming, changing colors; the last is still hanging to the end of the pipe, and rocks in the breeze. The swing moves. The little black dog, as light as a soap-bubble, jumps up on his hind legs to try to get into the swing. It moves, the dog falls down, barks, and is angry. They tease him; the bubble bursts! A swing—a bursting bubble—such is my song!”

“What you relate may be very pretty, but you tell it in so melancholy a manner and do not mention Kay.”

What do the Hyacinths say?

“There were once upon a time three sisters, quite transparent and very beautiful. The robe of the one was red, that of the second blue, and that of the third white. They danced hand-in-hand beside the calm lake in the clear moonshine. They were not elfin maidens, but mortal children. A sweet fragrance was smelt, and the maidens vanished in the wood; the fragrance grew stronger—three coffins, and in them three lovely maidens, passed out of the forest and across the lake: the shining glow-worms flew around like little floating lights. Do the dancing maidens sleep, or are they dead? The odor of the flowers says they are corpses; the evening bell tolls for the dead!”

“You make me quite sad,” said little Gerda. “I cannot

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help thinking of the dead maidens. Oh! is little Kay really dead? The Roses have been in the earth, and they say no."

"Ding, dong!" sounded the Hyacinth bells. "We do not toll for little Kay—we do not know him. That is our way of singing, the only one we have."

And Gerda went to the Ranunculus, that looked forth from among the shining green leaves.

"You are a little bright sun," said Gerda. "Tell me if you know where I can find my playfellow."

And the Ranunculus shone brightly and looked again at Gerda. What song could the Ranunculus sing? It was one that said nothing about Kay, either.

"In a small court the bright sun was shining in the first days of spring. The beams glided down the white walls of a neighbor's house, and close by the fresh yellow flowers were growing, shining like gold in the warm sun-rays. An old grandmother was sitting in the air; her granddaughter, the poor and lovely servant just come for a short visit. She knows her grandmother. There was gold, pure, virgin gold in that blessed kiss. There, that is my little story," said the Ranunculus.

"My poor old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "Yes, she is longing for me, no doubt; she is sorrowing for me, as she did for little Kay. But I will soon come home, and then I will bring Kay with me. It is of no use asking the flowers; they only know their own old rhymes, and can tell me nothing." And she tucked up her frock, to enable her to run quicker; but the Narcissus gave her a knock on the leg, just as she was going to jump over it. So she stood still, looked at the long, yellow flower, and asked, "You perhaps know something?" and she bent down to the Narcissus. And what did it say?

"I can see myself—I can see myself! Oh, how odorous I am! Up in the little garret there stands half-dressed a little Dancer. She stands now on one leg, now on both; she despises the whole world, yet she lives only in imagination. She pours water out of the teapot over a piece of stuff which she holds in her hand; it is the bodice: cleanliness is a fine thing. The white dress is

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hanging on the hook; it was washed in the teapot and dried on the roof. She puts it on, ties a saffron-colored kerchief round her neck, and then the gown looks whiter. I can see myself—I can see myself!"

"That's nothing to me," said little Gerda. "That does not concern me." And then off she ran to the farther end of the garden.

The gate was locked, but she shook the rusted bolt till it was loosened, and the gate opened; and little Gerda ran off bare-footed into the wide world. She looked round her thrice, but no one followed her. At last she could run no longer; she sat down on a large stone, and when she looked about her she saw that the summer had passed; it was late in the autumn, but that one could not remark in the beautiful garden, where there was always sunshine and where there were flowers the whole year round.

"Dear me, how long I have stayed!" said Gerda. "Autumn is come. I must not rest any longer." And she got up to go farther.

Oh, how tender and wearied her little feet were! All around it looked so cold and raw; the long willow-leaves were quite yellow, and the fog dripped from them like water; one leaf fell after the other: the sloes only stood full of fruit which set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how dark and comfortless it was in the dreary world!

FOURTH STORY

The Prince and the Princess

GERDA was obliged to rest herself again when, exactly opposite to her, a large raven came hopping over the white snow. He had long been looking at Gerda and shaking his head; and now he said, "Caw! caw!" Good day! good day! He could not say it better; but he felt a sympathy for the little girl, and asked her where she was going all alone. The word "alone" Gerda under-

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stood quite well, and felt how much was expressed by it, so she told the Raven her whole history and asked if he had not seen Kay.

The Raven nodded very gravely, and said: "It may be. It may be!"

"What! Do you really think so?" cried the little girl; and she nearly squeezed the Raven to death, so much did she kiss him.

"Gently, gently," said the Raven. "I think I know; I think that it may be little Kay. But now he has forgotten you for the Princess."

"Does he live with a princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes. Listen," said the Raven. "But it will be difficult for me to speak your language. If you understand the raven language I can tell you better."

"No, I have not learned it," said Gerda; "but my grandmother understands it, and she can speak gibberish, too. I wish I had learned it."

"No matter," said the Raven; "I will tell you as well as I can; however, it will be bad enough." And then he told all he knew.

"In the kingdom where we now are there lives a princess who is extraordinarily clever, for she has read all the newspapers in the whole world, and has forgotten them again, so clever is she. She was lately, it is said, sitting on her throne—which is not so very amusing, after all—when she began humming an old tune, and it was just 'Oh, why should I not be married?' 'That song is not without its meaning,' said she, and so then she was determined to marry; but she would have a husband who knew how to give an answer when he was spoken to, not one who looked only as if he were a great personage, for that is so tiresome. She then had all the ladies of the court drummed together; and when they heard her intention, all were well pleased, and said, 'We are quite glad to hear it; it is the very thing we were thinking of.' You may believe every word I say," said the Raven, "for I have a tame sweetheart that hops about in the palace quite free, and it was she who told me all this.

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"The newspapers appeared forthwith with a border of hearts and the initials of the Princess; and therein you might read that every good-looking young man was at liberty to come to the palace and speak to the Princess; and he who spoke in such wise as showed he felt himself at home there, that one the Princess would choose for her husband.

"Yes, yes," said the Raven, "you may believe it; it is as true as I am sitting here. People came in crowds; there was a crush and a hurry, but no one was successful on either the first or the second day. They could all talk well enough when they were out in the street, but as soon as they came inside the palace gates and saw the guard richly dressed in silver, and the lackeys in gold on the staircase, and the large illuminated saloons, then they were abashed; and when they stood before the throne on which the Princess was sitting all they could do was to repeat the last word they had uttered, and to hear it again did not interest her very much. It was just as if the people within were under a charm and had fallen into a trance till they came out again into the street; for then, oh, then they could chatter enough. There was a whole row of them standing from the town gates to the palace. I was there myself to look," said the Raven. "They grew hungry and thirsty, but from the palace they got nothing whatever, not even a glass of water. Some of the cleverest, it is true, had taken bread and butter with them; but none shared it with his neighbor, for each thought, 'Let him look hungry, and then the Princess won't have him.'"

"But Kay—little Kay," said Gerda; "when did he come? Was he among the number?"

"Patience, patience; we are just come to him. It was on the third day when a little personage without horse or equipage came marching right boldly up to the palace; his eyes shone like yours, he had beautiful long hair, but his clothes were very shabby."

"That was Kay," cried Gerda, with a voice of delight. "Oh, now I've found him!" And she clapped her hands for joy.

"He had a little knapsack at his back," said the Raven.

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"No, that was certainly his sledge," said Gerda; "for when he went away he took his sledge with him."

"That may be," said the Raven. "I did not examine him so minutely; but I know from my tame sweetheart that when he came into the courtyard of the palace and saw the body-guard in silver, the lackeys on the staircase, he was not the least abashed; he nodded, and said to them, 'It must be very tiresome to stand on the stairs; for my part, I shall go in.' The saloons were gleaming with lusters; privy-councilors and excellencies were walking about barefoot and wore gold keys; it was enough to make any one feel uncomfortable. His boots creaked, too, so loudly; but still he was not at all afraid."

"That's Kay, for certain," said Gerda. "I know he had on new boots; I have heard them creaking in grandmama's room."

"Yes, they creaked," said the Raven. "And on he went boldly up to the Princess, who was sitting on a pearl as large as a spinning-wheel. All the ladies of the court, with their attendants and attendants' attendants, and all the cavaliers, with their gentlemen and gentlemen's gentlemen, stood round; and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked. It was hardly possible to look at the gentleman's gentleman, so very haughtily did he stand in the doorway."

"It must have been terrible," said little Gerda. "And did Kay get the Princess?"

"Were I not a raven I should have taken the Princess myself, although I am promised. It is said he spoke as well as I speak when I talk raven language; this I learned from my tame sweetheart. He was bold and nicely behaved; he had not come to woo the Princess, but only to hear her wisdom. She pleased him, and he pleased her."

"Yes, yes; for certain that was Kay," said Gerda. "He was so clever; he could reckon fractions in his head. Oh, won't you take me to the palace?"

"That is very easily said," answered the Raven. "But how are we to manage it? I'll speak to my tame sweetheart about

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it; she must advise us; for so much I must tell you, such a little girl as you are will never get permission to enter."

"Oh yes, I shall," said Gerda. "When Kay hears that I am here he will come out directly to fetch me."

"Wait for me here on these steps," said the Raven. He moved his head backward and forward and flew away.

The evening was closing in when the Raven returned. "Caw! caw!" said he. "She sends you her compliments; and here is a roll for you. She took it out of the kitchen, where there is bread enough. You are hungry, no doubt. It is not possible for you to enter the palace, for you are barefoot; the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would not allow it; but do not cry, you shall come in still. My sweetheart knows a little back stair that leads to the bedchamber, and she knows where she can get the key of it."

And they went into the garden by the large avenue, where one leaf was falling after the other; and when the lights in the palace had all gradually disappeared the Raven led little Gerda to the back door, which stood half open.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with anxiety and longing! It was just as if she had been about to do something wrong, and yet she only wanted to know if little Kay was there. Yes, he must be there. She called to mind his intelligent eyes and his long hair so vividly, she could quite see him as he used to laugh when they were sitting under the roses at home. "He will, no doubt, be glad to see you, to hear what a long way you have come for his sake, to know how unhappy all at home were when he did not come back."

Oh, what a fright and a joy it was!

They were now on the stairs. A single lamp was burning there; and on the floor stood the tame Raven, turning her head on every side and looking at Gerda, who bowed as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My intended has told me so much good of you, my dear young lady," said the tame Raven. "Your tale is very affecting. If you will take the lamp I will go before. We will go straight on, for we shall meet no one."

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"I think there is somebody just behind us," said Gerda. And something rushed past. It was like shadowy figures on the wall—horses with flowing manes and thin legs, huntsmen, ladies and gentlemen on horseback.

"They are only dreams," said the Raven. "They come to fetch the thoughts of the high personages to the chase. 'Tis well, for now you can observe them in bed all the better. But let me find, when you enjoy honor and distinction, that you possess a grateful heart."

"Tut! That's not worth talking about," said the Raven of the woods.

They now entered the first saloon, which was of rose-colored satin, with artificial flowers on the wall. Here the dreams were rushing past, but they hastened by so quickly that Gerda could not see the high personages. One hall was more magnificent than the other; one might indeed well be abashed; and at last they came into the bedchamber. The ceiling of the room resembled a large palm-tree, with leaves of glass, of costly glass; and in the middle, from a thick golden stem, hung two beds, each of which resembled a lily. One was white, and in this lay the Princess; the other was red, and it was here that Gerda was to look for little Kay. She bent back one of the red leaves and saw a brown neck. Oh, that was Kay! She called him quite loud by name, held the lamp toward him. The dreams rushed back again into the chamber. He awoke, turned his head, and—it was not little Kay!

The Prince was only like him about the neck; but he was young and handsome. And out of the white lily leaves the Princess peeped, too, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda cried and told her her whole history and all that the Ravens had done for her.

"Poor little thing!" said the Prince and the Princess. They praised the Ravens very much, and told them they were not at all angry with them, but they were not to do so again. However, they should have a reward.

"Will you fly about here at liberty," asked the Princess,

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"or would you like to have a fixed appointment as court Ravens, with all the broken bits from the kitchen?"

And both the Ravens nodded, and begged for a fixed appointment, for they thought of their old age, and said, "It was a good thing to have a provision for their old days."

And the Prince got up and let Gerda sleep in his bed, and more than this he could not do. She folded her little hands and thought, "How good men and animals are!" and she then fell asleep and slept soundly. All the dreams flew in again, and they now looked like the angels; they drew a little sledge, in which little Kay sat and nodded his head; but the whole was only a dream, and therefore it all vanished as soon as she awoke.

The next day she was dressed from head to foot in silk and velvet. They offered to let her stay at the palace and lead a happy life, but she begged to have a little carriage with a horse in front, and for a small pair of shoes; then, she said, she would again go forth in the wide world and look for Kay.

Shoes and a muff were given her; she was, too, dressed very nicely, and when she was about to set off a new carriage stopped before the door. It was of pure gold, and the arms of the Prince and the Princess shone like a star upon it; the coachman, the footmen, and the outriders—for outriders were there, too—all wore golden crowns. The Prince and the Princess assisted her into the carriage themselves and wished her all success. The Raven of the woods, who was now married, accompanied her for the first three miles. He sat beside Gerda, for he could not bear riding backward; the other Raven stood in the doorway and flapped her wings; she could not accompany Gerda because she suffered from headache, since she had had a fixed appointment and ate so much. The carriage was lined inside with sugar-plums, and in the seats were fruits and gingerbread.

"Farewell! farewell!" cried Prince and Princess; and Gerda wept, and the Raven wept. Thus passed the first miles; and then the Raven bade her farewell, and this was the most painful separation of all. He flew into a tree and beat his black wings as long as he could see the carriage, that shone from afar like a sunbeam.

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FIFTH STORY

The Little Robber-Maiden

THEY drove through the dark wood, but the carriage shone like a torch, and it dazzled the eyes of the robbers so that they could not bear to look at it.

“‘Tis gold. ‘Tis gold!” cried they; and they rushed forward, seized the horses, knocked down the little postilion, the coachman, and the servants, and pulled little Gerda out of the carriage.

“How plump, how beautiful she is! She must have been fed on nut-kernels,” said the old female Robber, who had a long, scrubby beard, and bushy eyebrows that hung down over her eyes. “She is as good as a fatted lamb! How nice she will be!” And then she drew out a knife, the blade of which shone so that it was quite dreadful to behold.

“Oh!” cried the woman, at the same moment. She had been bitten in the ear by her own little daughter, who hung at her back, and who was so wild and unmanageable that it was quite amusing to see her. “You naughty child!” said the mother. And now she had not time to kill Gerda.

“She shall play with me,” said the little Robber-child. “She shall give me her muff and her pretty frock; she shall sleep in my bed!” And then she gave her mother another bite, so that she jumped and ran round with the pain.

And the robbers laughed, and said, “Look how she is dancing with the little one!”

“I will go into the carriage,” said the little Robber-maiden; and she would have her will, for she was very spoiled and very headstrong. She and Gerda got in, and then away they drove over the stumps of felled trees, deeper and deeper into the woods. The little Robber-maiden was as tall as Gerda, but stronger, broader-shouldered, and of dark complexion; her eyes were quite black; they looked almost melancholy. She embraced

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little Gerda, and said: "They shall not kill you as long as I am not displeased with you. You are doubtless a princess?"

"No," said little Gerda, who then related all that had happened to her and how much she cared about little Kay.

The little Robber-maiden looked at her with a serious air, nodded her head slightly, and said, "They shall not kill you, even if I am angry with you; then I will do it myself." And she dried Gerda's eyes and put both her hands in the handsome muff, which was so soft and warm.

At length the carriage stopped. They were in the midst of the courtyard of a robber's castle. It was full of cracks from top to bottom; and out of the openings magpies and rooks were flying; and the great bulldogs, each of which looked as if he could swallow a man, jumped up, but they did not bark, for that was forbidden.

In the midst of the large, old, smoking hall burned a great fire on the stone floor. The smoke disappeared under the stones and had to seek its own egress. In an immense cauldron soup was boiling, and rabbits and hares were being roasted on a spit.

"You shall sleep with me to-night, with all my animals," said the little Robber-maiden. They had something to eat and drink, and then went into a corner, where straw and carpets were lying. Beside them, on laths and perches, sat nearly a hundred pigeons, all asleep, seemingly, but yet they moved a little when the Robber-maiden came. "They are all mine," said she, at the same time seizing one that was next her by the legs and shaking it so that its wings fluttered. "Kiss it!" cried the little girl, and flung the pigeon in Gerda's face. "Up there is the rabble of the wood," continued she, pointing to several laths which were fastened before a hole high up in the wall; "that's the rabble; they would all fly away immediately if they were not well fastened in. And here is my dear old Bac." And she laid hold of the horns of a reindeer that had a bright copper ring round its neck and was tethered to the spot. "We are obliged to lock this fellow in, too, or he would make his escape. Every evening I tickle his neck with my sharp knife; he is so frightened

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at it!" And the little girl drew forth a long knife from a crack in the wall and let it glide over the reindeer's neck. The poor animal kicked; the girl laughed, and pulled Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you intend to keep your knife while you sleep?" asked Gerda, looking at it rather fearfully.

"I always sleep with the knife," said the little Robber-maiden; "there is no knowing what may happen. But tell me now, once more, all about little Kay, and why you have started off in the wide world alone."

And Gerda related all, from the very beginning. The Wood-pigeons cooed above in their cage, and the others slept. The little Robber-maiden wound her arm round Gerda's neck, held the knife in the other hand, and snored so loudly that everybody could hear her, but Gerda could not close her eyes, for she did not know whether she was to live or die. The robbers sat round the fire, sang and drank; and the old female robber jumped about so that it was dreadful for Gerda to see her.

Then the wood-pigeons said: "Coo! coo! We have seen little Kay! A white hen carries his sledge; he himself sat in the carriage of the Snow-queen, who passed here, down just over the wood, as we lay in our nest. She blew upon us young ones, and all died except we two. Coo! coo!"

"What is that you say up there?" cried little Gerda. "Where did the Snow-queen go to? Do you know anything about it?"

"She is no doubt gone to Lapland, for there are always snow and ice there. Only ask the Reindeer who is tethered here."

"Aye, ice and snow indeed! There it is glorious and beautiful!" said the Reindeer. "One can spring about in the large, shining valleys! The Snow-queen has her summer tent there, but her fixed abode is high up toward the north pole, on the island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh, Kay! Poor little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"Do you choose to be quiet?" said the Robber-maiden. "If you don't I shall make you."

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood-pigeons had

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said, and the little maiden looked very serious, but she nodded her head and said: "That's no matter—that's no matter. Do you know where Lapland lies?" asked she of the Reindeer.

"Who should know better than I?" said the animal; and his eyes rolled in his head. "I was born and bred there; there I leaped about on the fields of snow."

"Listen," said the Robber-maiden to Gerda. "You see that the men are gone; but my mother is still here and will remain. However, toward morning she takes a draught out of the large flask, and then she sleeps a little; then I will do something for you." She now jumped out of bed, flew to her mother, with her arms round her neck, and, pulling her by the beard, said, "Good-morrow, my own sweet nanny-goat of a mother." And her mother took hold of her nose and pinched it till it was red and blue; but this was all done out of pure love.

When the mother had taken a sup at her flask and was having a nap the little Robber-maiden went to the Reindeer and said: "I should very much like to give you still many a tickling with the sharp knife, for then you are so amusing; however, I will untether you and help you out, so that you may get back to Lapland. But you must make good use of your legs, and take this little girl for me to the palace of the Snow-queen, where her playfellow is. You have heard, I suppose, all she said, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The Reindeer gave a bound for joy. The Robber-maiden lifted up little Gerda, and took precaution to bind her fast on the Reindeer's back; she even gave her a small cushion to sit on. "Here are your worsted leggings, for it will be cold; but the muff I shall keep for myself, for it is so pretty. But I do not wish you to be cold. Here is a pair of lined gloves of my mother's; they just reach up to your elbow. On with them! Now you look about the hands just like my ugly old mother!"

And Gerda wept for joy.

"I can't bear to see you fretting," said the little Robber-maiden. "This is just the time when you ought to look pleased. Here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you won't starve."

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The bread and the meat were fastened to the Reindeer's back; the little maiden opened the door, called all the dogs, and then with her knife cut the rope that fastened the animal, and said to him, "Now off with you; but take good care of the little girl!"

And Gerda stretched out her hands with the large wadded gloves toward the Robber-maiden, and said, "Farewell!" and the Reindeer flew on over bush and bramble, through the great wood, over moor and heath, as fast as he could go.

"Ddsa! ddsal!" was heard in the sky. It was just as if somebody was sneezing.

"These are my old northern lights," said the Reindeer; "look how they gleam!" And on he now sped still quicker; day and night on he went. The loaves were consumed, and the ham, too; and now they were in Lapland.

SIXTH STORY

The Lapland Woman and the Finland Woman

SUDDENLY they stopped before a little house which looked very miserable; the roof reached to the ground, and the door was so low that the family were obliged to creep upon their stomachs when they went in or out. Nobody was at home except an old Lapland woman, who was dressing fish by the light of an oil-lamp. And the Reindeer told her the whole of Gerda's history, but first of all his own, for that seemed to him of much greater importance. Gerda was so chilled that she could not speak.

"Poor thing!" said the Lapland woman, "you have far to run still. You have more than a hundred miles to go before you get to Finland; there the Snow-queen has her country-house and burns blue lights every evening. I will give you a few words from me, which I will write on a dried haberdine, for paper I have none; this you can take with you to the Finland woman, and she will be able to give you more information than I can."

When Gerda had warmed herself, and had eaten and drunk, the Lapland woman wrote a few words on a dried haberdine, begged

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Gerda to take care of them, put her on the Reindeer, bound her fast, and away sprang the animal. "Ddsal! ddsal!" was again heard in the air; the most charming blue lights burned the whole night in the sky, and at last they came to Finland. They knocked at the chimney of the Finland woman—for as to a door, she had none.

There was such a heat inside that the Finland woman herself went about almost naked. She was diminutive and dirty. She immediately loosened little Gerda's clothes, pulled off her thick gloves and boots, for otherwise the heat would have been too great, and after laying a piece of ice on the Reindeer's head read what was written on the fish-skin. She read it three times; she then knew it by heart, so she put the fish into the cupboard, for it might very well be eaten, and she never threw anything away.

Then the Reindeer related his own story first, and afterward that of little Gerda; and the Finland woman winked her eyes, but said nothing.

"You are so clever," said the Reindeer; "you can, I know, twist all the winds of the world together in a knot. If the seaman loosens one knot, then he has a good wind; if a second, then it blows pretty stiffly; if he undoes the third and fourth, then it rages so that the forests are upturned. Will you give the little maiden a potion, that she may possess the strength of twelve men and vanquish the Snow-queen?"

"The strength of twelve men!" said the Finland woman; "much good that would be!" Then she went to a cupboard and drew out a large skin rolled up. When she had unrolled it, strange characters were to be seen written thereon, and the Finland woman read at such a rate that the perspiration trickled down her forehead. But the Reindeer begged so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda looked so imploringly with tearful eyes at the Finland woman, that she winked and drew the Reindeer aside into a corner, where they whispered together, while the animal got some fresh ice put on his head.

"'Tis true little Kay is at the Snow-queen's and finds every-

GERDA SAID FAREWELL TO THE ROBBER-MAIDEN



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thing there quite to his taste, and he thinks it the very best place in the world, but the reason of that is he has a splinter of glass in his eye and in his heart. These must be got out first, otherwise he will never go back to mankind, and the Snow-queen will retain her power over him."

"But can you give little Gerda nothing to take which will endue her with power over the whole?"

"I can give her no more power than what she has already. Don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how men and animals are forced to serve her; how well she gets through the world barefooted? She must not hear of her power from us; that power lies in her heart, because she is a sweet and innocent child. If she cannot get to the Snow-queen by herself and rid little Kay of the glass, we cannot help her. Two miles hence the garden of the Snow-queen begins; thither you may carry the little girl. Set her down by the large bush with red berries, standing in the snow; don't stay talking, but hasten back as fast as possible." And now the Finland woman placed little Gerda on the Reindeer's back, and off he ran with all imaginable speed.

"Oh, I have not got my boots! I have not brought my gloves!" cried little Gerda. She remarked she was without them from the cutting frost, but the Reindeer dared not stand still. On he ran till he came to the great bush with the red berries, and there he set Gerda down, kissed her mouth, while large, bright tears flowed from the animal's eyes, and then back he went as fast as possible. There stood poor Gerda now, without shoes or gloves, in the very middle of dreadful, icy Finland.

She ran on as fast as she could. There then came a whole regiment of snowflakes, but they did not fall from above, and they were quite bright and shining from the aurora borealis. The flakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the larger they grew. Gerda well remembered how large and strange the snowflakes appeared when she once saw them through a magnifying-glass; but now they were large and terrific in another manner—they were all alive. They were the outposts of the Snow-queen. They had the most wondrous shapes; some looked

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like large ugly porcupines; others like snakes knotted together, with their heads sticking out; and others again like small fat bears, with the hair standing on end; all were of dazzling whiteness—all were living snowflakes.

Little Gerda repeated the Lord's Prayer. The cold was so intense that she could see her own breath, which came like smoke out of her mouth. It grew thicker and thicker, and took the form of little angels that grew more and more when they touched the earth. All had helms on their heads, and lances and shields in their hands; they increased in numbers, and when Gerda had finished the Lord's Prayer she was surrounded by a whole legion. They thrust at the horrid snowflakes with their spears, so that they flew into a thousand pieces, and little Gerda walked on bravely and in security. The angels patted her hands and feet, and then she felt the cold less and went on quickly toward the palace of the Snow-queen.

But now we shall see how Kay fared. He never thought of Gerda, and least of all that she was standing before the palace.

SEVENTH STORY

What Took Place in the Palace of the Snow-Queen, and What Happened Afterward

THE walls of the palace were of driving snow, and the windows and doors of cutting winds. There were more than a hundred halls there, according as the snow was driven by the winds. The largest was many miles in extent; all were lighted up by the powerful aurora borealis, and all were so large, so empty, so icy cold, and so resplendent! Mirth never reigned there; there was never even a little bear-ball, with the storm for music, while the polar bears went on their hind legs and showed off their steps. Never a little tea-party of white young lady foxes; vast, cold, and empty were the halls of the Snow-queen. The northern lights shone with such precision that one could tell exactly when they were at their highest or lowest degree of brightness. In the

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middle of the empty, endless hall of snow was a frozen lake; it was cracked in a thousand pieces, but each piece was so like the other that it seemed the work of a cunning artificer. In the middle of this lake sat the Snow-queen when she was at home; and then she said she was sitting in the Mirror of Understanding, and that this was the only one and the best thing in the world.

Little Kay was quite blue—yes, nearly black—with cold, but he did not observe it, for she had kissed away all feeling of cold from his body, and his heart was a lump of ice. He was dragging along some pointed flat pieces of ice which he laid together in all possible ways, for he wanted to make something with them, just as we have little flat pieces of wood to make geometrical figures with, called the Chinese Puzzle. Kay made all sorts of figures, the most complicated, for it was an ice-puzzle for the understanding. In his eyes the figures were extraordinarily beautiful and of the utmost importance, for the bit of glass which was in his eye caused this. He found whole figures which represented a written word, but he never could manage to represent just the word he wanted—that word was “Eternity”; and the Snow-queen had said, “If you can discover that figure you shall be your own master, and I will make you a present of the whole world and a pair of new skates.” But he could not find it out.

“I am going now to the warm lands,” said the Snow-queen. “I must have a look down into the black caldrons.” It was the volcanoes Vesuvius and Etna that she meant. “I will just give them a coating of white, for that is as it ought to be; besides, it is good for the oranges and the grapes.” And then away she flew; and Kay sat quite alone in the empty halls of ice that were miles long, and looked at the blocks of ice, and thought and thought till his skull was almost cracked. There he sat quite benumbed and motionless; one would have imagined he was frozen to death.

Suddenly little Gerda stepped through the great portal into the palace. The gate was formed of cutting winds; but Gerda repeated her evening prayer, and the winds were laid as though they slept, and the little maiden entered the vast, empty, cold

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halls. There she beheld Kay. She recognized him, flew to embrace him, and cried out, her arms firmly holding him the while, "Kay, sweet little Kay! Have I then found you at last?"

But he sat quite still, benumbed and cold. Then little Gerda shed burning tears, and they fell on his bosom, they penetrated to his heart, they thawed the lumps of ice, and consumed the splinters of the looking-glass; he looked at her, and she sang the hymn:

The rose in the valley is blooming so sweet,
The Child Jesus is there the children to greet.

Hereupon Kay burst into tears; he wept so much that the splinter rolled out of his eye, and he recognized her and shouted: "Gerda, sweet little Gerda! Where have you been so long? And where have I been?" He looked round him. "How cold it is here!" said he. "How empty and cold!" And he held fast by Gerda, who laughed and wept for joy. It was so beautiful that even the blocks of ice danced about for joy, and when they were tired and laid themselves down they formed exactly the letters which the Snow-queen had told him to find out; so now he was his own master, and he would have the whole world and a pair of new skates into the bargain.

Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they grew quite blooming; she kissed his eyes, and they shone like her own; she kissed his hands and feet, and he was again well and merry. The Snow-queen might come back as soon as she liked; there stood his discharge written in resplendent masses of ice.

They took each other by the hand and wandered forth out of the large hall; they talked of their old grandmother and of the roses upon the roof, and wherever they went the winds ceased raging and the sun burst forth. And when they reached the bush with the red berries they found the Reindeer waiting for them. He had brought another, a young one, with him, whose udder was filled with milk, which he gave to the little ones, and kissed their lips. They then carried Kay and Gerda first to the Finland woman, where they warmed themselves in the warm room and

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learned what they were to do on their journey home; and then they went to the Lapland woman, who made some new clothes for them and repaired their sledges.

The Reindeer and the young hind leaped along beside them and accompanied them to the boundary of the country. Here the first vegetation peeped forth; here Kay and Gerda took leave of the Lapland woman. "Farewell! farewell!" said they all. And the first green buds appeared, the first little birds began to chirrup, and out of the wood came, riding on a magnificent horse which Gerda knew (it was one of the leaders in the golden carriage), a young damsel with a bright-red cap on her head and armed with pistols. It was the little Robber-maiden, who, tired of being at home, had determined to make a journey to the north, and afterward in another direction if that did not please her. She recognized Gerda immediately; and Gerda knew her, too. It was a joyful meeting.

"You are a fine fellow for tramping about," said she to little Kay; "I should like to know, faith, if you deserve that one should run from one end of the world to the other for your sake!"

But Gerda patted her cheeks and inquired for the Prince and Princess.

"They are gone abroad," said the other.

"But the Raven?" asked little Gerda.

"Oh, the Raven is dead," answered she. "His tame sweetheart is a widow, and wears a bit of black worsted round her leg; she laments most piteously, but it's all mere talk and stuff! Now tell me what you've been doing and how you managed to catch him."

And Gerda and Kay both told her their story.

And "Schnipp-schnapp-schnurre-basselurre," said the Robber-maiden, and she took the hands of each, and promised that if she should some day pass through the town where they lived she would come and visit them, and then away she rode. Kay and Gerda took each other's hand. It was lovely spring weather, with abundance of flowers and of verdure. The church-bells rang, and the children recognized the high towers, and the large

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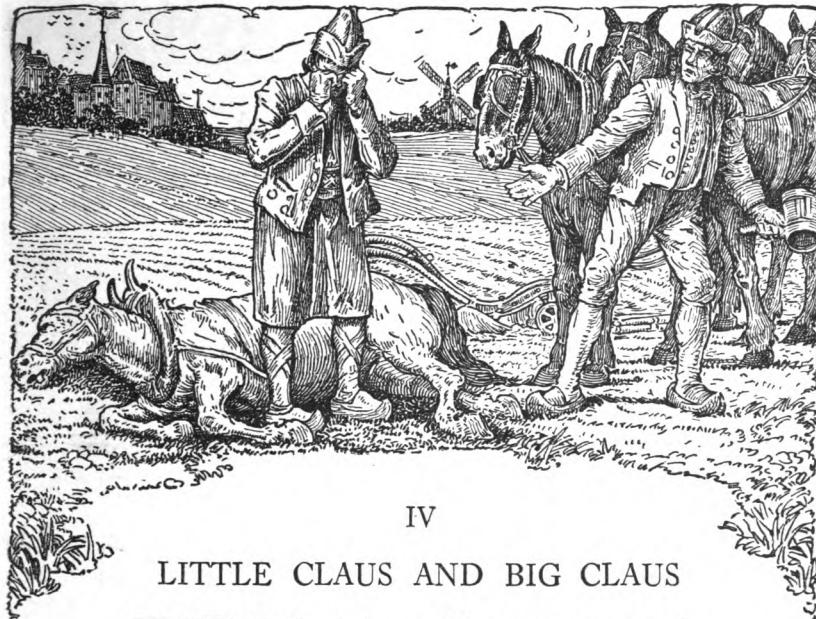
town; it was that in which they dwelt. They entered, and hastened up to their grandmother's room, where everything was standing as formerly. The clock said, "Tick! tack!" and the finger moved round, but as they entered they remarked that they were now grown up. The roses on the leads hung blooming in at the open window; there stood the little children's chairs, and Kay and Gerda sat down on them, holding each other by the hand; they both had forgotten the cold, empty splendor of the Snow-queen as though it had been a dream. The grandmother sat in the bright sunshine and read aloud from the Bible, "Unless ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

And Kay and Gerda looked in each other's eyes, and all at once they understood the old hymn:

The rose in the valley is blooming so sweet,
The Child Jesus is there the children to greet.

There sat the two grown-up persons; grown-up, and yet children, children at least in heart. And it was summer-time, summer, glorious summer!





IV

LITTLE CLAUS AND BIG CLAUS

THREE lived in a village two men who both had the same name—they were called Claus; but one of them had four horses and the other had only one horse, so in order to tell one from the other people called the owner of the four horses “Big Claus” and him who had only one “Little Claus.” Now we shall hear what happened to the two, for this is a true story.

The whole week through Little Claus was obliged to plow for Big Claus, and lend him his one horse, and in return Big Claus lent him all his four horses, but only on one day of the week, and that was Sunday. Then how proudly Little Claus would smack his whip over all five horses! They were as good as his own on that one day. The sun shone brightly, and all the bells in the church-tower were ringing merrily as the people passed by, dressed in their best clothes, with their prayer-books under their arms. They were going to hear the clergyman preach, and they looked at Little Claus plowing with his five horses, and he was so proud that he smacked his whip and said, “G’up, all my horses!”

“You must not say that,” said Big Claus, “for only one of them belongs to you.”

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But when another lot of people went by to church Little Claus forgot what he ought to say and called out, "G'up, all my horses!"

"Now, I tell you not to say that again," said Big Claus; "for if you do I shall hit your horse on the head so that he will drop dead on the spot, and that will be the end of him."

"I promise you I will not say it any more," said the other; but as soon as people came by, nodding to him, and wishing him "Good day," he became so pleased and thought how grand it looked to have five horses plowing in his field that he cried out again, "G'up, all my horses!"

"I'll g'up your horses for you," said Big Claus, and, seizing a carriage-weight, he struck the one horse of Little Claus on the head, and he fell dead instantly.

"Ah! now I have no horse at all," said Little Claus, and he began to weep. But after a while he took off the dead horse's skin and hung the hide to dry in the wind. Then he put the dry skin into a bag and, placing it over his shoulder, went out into the next town to sell the horse's hide.

He had a very long way to go and had to pass through a dark, gloomy forest. Presently a storm arose and he lost his way, and before he discovered the right path evening came on, and it was still a long way to the town, and too far to return home before night.

Near the road stood a large farm-house. The shutters outside the windows were closed, but lights shone through the crevices and at the top. "I might get permission to stay here for the night," thought Little Claus; so he went up to the door and knocked.

The Farmer's Wife opened the door, but when she heard what he wanted she told him to go away, as her husband would not allow her to admit strangers.

"Then I shall be obliged to lie out here," said Little Claus to himself; and the Farmer's Wife shut the door in his face.

Near to the farm-house stood a large haystack, and between it and the house was a small shed with a thatched roof.

"I can lie up there," said Little Claus as he saw the roof;

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will make a famous bed, but I hope the stork will not fly down and bite my legs"; for on it stood a living stork, whose nest was in the roof.

So Little Claus climbed to the roof of the shed, and while he turned himself to get comfortable he discovered that the wooden shutters, which were closed, did not reach to the tops of the windows of the farm-house, so that he could see into a room in which a large table was laid out with wine, roast meat, and a splendid fish. The Farmer's Wife and the Sexton were sitting at the table together, and she filled his glass and helped him plentifully to fish, for that was something he was fond of.

"If I could only get some, too," thought Little Claus; and he stretched his neck toward the window. Oh, what a lovely pie he could see there! Oh, but that was a feast!

Now he heard some one riding down the road toward the farm-house. It was the woman's husband coming home. He was a good man, but still he had a very strange prejudice—he could not bear the sight of a sexton. If one appeared before him he would put himself in a terrible rage. And so it was that the Sexton had gone to visit the Farmer's Wife during her husband's absence from home, and the good woman had placed before him the best she had in the house to eat. When she heard the Farmer coming she was frightened, and begged the Sexton to hide himself in a large empty chest that stood in the room. He did so, for he knew her husband could not endure the sight of a sexton. The woman then quickly put away the wine and hid all the rest of the nice things in the oven, for if her husband had seen them he would have asked what they were brought out for.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus, from the top of the shed, as he saw all the good things disappear.

"Is any one up there?" asked the Farmer, looking up and discovering Little Claus. "Why are you lying up there? Come down and come into the house with me."

So Little Claus came down and told the Farmer how he had lost his way and begged for a night's lodging.

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"All right," said the Farmer, "but we must have something to eat first."

The woman received them both very kindly, laid the cloth on a large table, and placed before them a dish of groats. The Farmer was very hungry and ate his groats with a good appetite; but Little Claus could not help thinking of the nice roast meat, fish, and pies which he knew were in the oven. Under the table at his feet lay the sack containing the horse's skin, which he intended to sell at the next town. Now Little Claus did not relish the groats at all, so he trod with his foot on the sack under the table, and the dry skin squeaked quite loud. "Hush!" said Little Claus to his sack, at the same time treading upon it again till it squeaked louder than before.

"Hello! What have you got in your sack?" asked the Farmer.

"Oh, it is a conjurer," said Little Claus; "and he says we need not eat groats, for he has conjured the oven full of roast meat, fish, and pie."

"Wonderful!" cried the Farmer, and he opened the oven door; and there lay all the nice things hidden by the Farmer's Wife, but which he supposed had been conjured there by the wizard under the table. The woman dared not say anything; so she placed the things before them, and they both ate of the fish, the meat, and the pastry.

Then Little Claus trod again upon his sack, and it squeaked as before.

"What does he say now?" asked the Farmer.

"He says," replied Little Claus, "that there are three bottles of wine for us standing in the corner by the oven."

So the woman was obliged to bring out the wine also, which she had hidden, and the Farmer drank it till he became quite merry. He would have liked such a conjurer as Little Claus carried in his sack. "Could he conjure up the devil?" asked the Farmer. "I should like to see him now, while I am so merry."

"Oh yes!" replied Little Claus, "my conjurer can do any thing I ask him—can you not?" he asked, treading at the same

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time on the sack till it squeaked. "Do you hear? He answers 'Yes,' but he fears that we shall not like to look at him."

"Oh, I am not afraid. What will he be like?"

"Well, he is very much like a sexton."

"Ha!" said the Farmer. "Then he must be ugly. Do you know, I cannot endure the sight of a sexton. However, that doesn't matter; I shall know who it is, so I shall not mind. Now then, I have got up my courage, but don't let him come too near me."

"Stop! I must ask the conjurer," said Little Claus; so he trod on the bag, and stooped his ear down to listen.

"What does he say?"

"He says that you must go and open that large chest which stands in the corner, and you will see the devil crouching down inside; but you must hold the lid firmly, that he may not slip out."

"Will you come and help me hold it?" said the Farmer, going toward the chest in which his wife had hidden the Sexton, who now lay inside, very much frightened. The Farmer lifted the lid a very little way and peeped in.

"Eh!" cried he, springing backward. "Ah, I saw him, and he is exactly like our sexton. How dreadful it is!" So after that he was obliged to drink again, and they sat and drank till far into the night.

"You must sell your conjurer to me," said the Farmer; "ask as much as you like, I will pay it; indeed, I would give you directly a whole bushel of gold."

"No, indeed, I cannot," said Little Claus; "only think how much profit I could make out of this conjurer."

"But I should like to have him," said the Farmer, still continuing his entreaties.

"Well," said Little Claus, at length, "you have been so good as to give me a night's lodging, I will not refuse you; you shall have the conjurer for a bushel of money, but I will have quite full measure."

"So you shall," said the Farmer; "but you must take away

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the chest as well. I would not have it in the house another hour; there is no knowing if *he* may not be still there."

So Little Claus gave the Farmer the sack containing the dried horse's skin and received in exchange a bushel of money—full measure. The Farmer also gave him a wheelbarrow on which to carry away the chest and the gold.

"Farewell," said Little Claus, as he went off with his money and the great chest, in which the Sexton lay still concealed. On one side of the forest was a broad, deep river; the water flowed so rapidly that very few were able to swim against the stream. A new bridge had lately been built across it, and in the middle of this bridge Little Claus stopped, and said, loud enough to be heard by the Sexton:

"Now, what shall I do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were full of stones. I shall be tired if I roll it any farther, so I may as well throw it into the river; if it swims after me to my house, well and good; and if not, it will not much matter."

So he seized the chest in his hand and lifted it up a little, as if he were going to throw it into the water.

"No, leave it alone," cried the Sexton, from within the chest. "Let me out first."

"Oh!" exclaimed Little Claus, pretending to be frightened, "he is in there still, is he? I must throw him into the river, that he may be drowned."

"Oh no! Oh no!" cried the Sexton. "I will give you a whole bushelful of money if you will let me go."

"Why, that is another matter," said Little Claus, opening the chest. The Sexton crept out, pushed the empty chest into the water, and went to his house; then he measured out a whole bushelful of gold for Little Claus, who had already received one from the Farmer, so that now he had a barrowful.

"I have been well paid for my horse," said he to himself, when he reached home, entered his own room, and emptied all his money into a heap on the floor. "How vexed Big Claus will be when he finds how rich I have become all through my one

THE FARMER LIFTED THE LID AND PEEPED IN



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horse; but I shall not tell him exactly how it all happened.” Then he sent a boy to Big Claus to borrow a bushel measure.

“What can he want it for?” thought Big Claus; so he smeared the bottom of the measure with tar, that some of whatever was put into it might stick there and remain. And so it happened; for, when the measure returned, three new silver florins were sticking to it.

“What does this mean?” said Big Claus; so he ran off directly to Little Claus and asked, “Where did you get so much money?”

“Oh, for my horse’s hide; I sold it yesterday.”

“It was certainly well paid for, then,” said Big Claus; and he ran home to his house, seized a hatchet, and knocked all his four horses on the head, flayed off their skins, and took them to the town to sell. “Hides, hides! Who’ll buy hides?” he cried, as he went through the streets. All the shoemakers and tanners came running and asked how much he wanted for them.

“A bushel of money for each,” replied Big Claus.

“Are you mad?” they all cried. “Do you think we have money to spend by the bushel?”

“Hides, hides!” he cried again. “Who’ll buy hides?” But to all who inquired the price his answer was, “A bushel of money.”

“He is making fools of us,” said they all; then the shoemakers took their straps, and the tanners their leather aprons, and began to beat Big Claus.

“Hides, hides!” they cried, mocking him. “Yes, we’ll mark your hide for you till it is black and blue.”

“Out of the town with him,” said they. And Big Claus was obliged to run as fast as he could; he had never before been so thoroughly beaten.

“Ah,” said he, as he came to his house, “Little Claus shall pay me for this; I will beat him to death.”

Now it happened that the old grandmother of Little Claus died. She had been cross, unkind, and really spiteful to him; but he was very sorry, and took the dead woman and laid her

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in his warm bed to see if he could bring her to life again. There he determined that she should lie the whole night, while he seated himself in a chair in a corner of the room, as he had often done before.

During the night, as he sat there, the door opened, and in came Big Claus with a hatchet. He knew well where Little Claus's bed stood, so he went right up to it and struck the old grandmother on the head, thinking it must be Little Claus.

"There!" cried he. "Now you cannot make a fool of me again," and then he went home.

"That is a very wicked man," thought Little Claus; "he meant to kill me. It is a good thing for my old grandmother that she was already dead, or he would have taken her life."

Then he dressed his old grandmother in her best clothes, borrowed a horse of his neighbor, and harnessed it to a cart. Then he placed the old woman on the back seat, so that she might not fall out as he drove, and rode away through the wood. By sunrise they reached a large inn, where Little Claus stopped and went to get something to eat.

The Landlord was a rich man and a good man, too, but as passionate as if he had been made of pepper and snuff.

"Good morning," said he to Little Claus; "you are come betimes to-day."

"Yes," said Little Claus; "I am going to the town with my old grandmother; she is sitting at the back of the wagon, but I cannot bring her into the room. Will you take her a glass of mead? But you must speak very loud, for she cannot hear well."

"Yes, certainly I will," replied the Landlord. And, pouring out a glass of mead, he carried it out to the dead grandmother, who sat upright in the cart.

"Here is a glass of mead from your grandson," said the Landlord.

The dead woman did not answer a word, but sat quite still.

"Do you not hear?" cried the Landlord, as loud as he could. "Here is a glass of mead from your grandson."

Again and again he bawled it out, but as she did not stir he

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flew into a passion and threw the glass of mead in her face; it struck her on the nose, and she fell backward out of the cart, for she was only seated there, not tied in.

“Mercy!” cried Little Claus, and sprang out of the door, and seized hold of the Landlord by the throat. “You have killed my grandmother! See, here is a great hole in her forehead.”

“Oh, how unfortunate,” said the Landlord, wringing his hands. “This all comes of my fiery temper. Dear Little Claus, I will give you a whole bushel of money, and will bury your grandmother as if she were my own; only keep silent, or else they will cut off my head, and that would be disagreeable.”

So it happened that Little Claus received another bushel of money, and the Landlord buried his old grandmother as if she had been his own.

When now Little Claus reached home again he immediately sent a boy to Big Claus, requesting him to lend him a bushel measure.

“How is this?” thought Big Claus. “Did I not kill him? I must go and see for myself.” So he went to Little Claus, and took the bushel measure with him. “How did you get all this money?” asked Big Claus, staring with wide-open eyes at his neighbor’s treasures.

“You killed my grandmother instead of me,” said Little Claus, “so I have sold her for a bushel of money.”

“That is a good price, anyway,” said Big Claus. So he went home, took a hatchet, and killed his old grandmother with one blow. Then he placed her on a cart and drove into the town to the Apothecary and asked him if he would buy a dead body.

“Whose is it, and where did you get it?” asked the Apothecary.

“It is my grandmother,” he replied; I struck her dead for a bushel of money.”

“Heaven preserve us!” cried the Apothecary. “You are out of your mind. Don’t say such things, or you will lose your head.” And then he talked to him seriously about the wicked deed he had done, and told him that such a wicked man would surely be punished. Big Claus got so frightened that he rushed out of the

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apothecary shop, jumped into the cart, whipped up his horses, and drove home quickly. The Apothecary and all the people thought him mad and let him drive where he liked.

"You shall pay for this," said Big Claus, as soon as he got into the highroad. "That you shall, Little Claus." So as soon as he reached home he took the largest sack he could find and went over to Little Claus. "You have played me another trick," said he. "First I killed all my horses, and then my old grandmother, and it is all your fault, but you shall not make a fool of me any more." So he laid hold of Little Claus round the body and pushed him into the sack, which he took on his shoulders, saying, "Now I'm going to drown you in the river."

He had a long way to go before he reached the river, and Little Claus was not a very light weight to carry. The road led by the church, and as they passed he could hear the organ playing and the people singing beautifully. Big Claus put down the sack close to the church door, and thought he might as well go in and hear a psalm before he went any farther. Little Claus could not possibly get out of the sack, and all the people were in church, so in he went.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus in the sack, as he turned and twisted about; but he found he could not loosen the string with which it was tied. Presently an old cattle-driver with snowy hair passed by, carrying a large staff in his hand with which he drove a large herd of cows and oxen before him. They stumbled against the sack in which lay Little Claus, and turned it over. "Oh, dear!" sighed Little Claus. "I am so young and going so soon to heaven."

"And I, poor fellow," said the drover, "I, who am so old already, cannot get there."

"Open the sack," cried Little Claus; "creep into it instead of me, and you will soon be there."

"With all my heart," replied the drover, opening the sack, from which sprang Little Claus as quickly as possible. "Will you take care of my cattle?" said the old man as he crept into the bag.

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“Yes,” said Little Claus, and he tied up the sack, and then walked off with all the cows and oxen.

When Big Claus came out of church he took up the sack and placed it on his shoulders. It appeared to have become lighter, for the old drover was not half so heavy as Little Claus.

“How light he seems now,” said he. “Ah, it is because I have been to a church.” So he walked on to the river, which was deep and broad, and threw the sack containing the old drover into the water, believing it to be Little Claus. “There you may lie!” he exclaimed. “You will play me no more tricks now.” Then he turned to go home, but when he came to a place where two roads crossed there was Little Claus driving the cattle. “How is this?” said Big Claus. “Did I not drown you just now?”

“Yes,” said Little Claus, “you threw me into the river about half an hour ago.”

“But where ever did you get all these fine beasts?” asked Big Claus.

“These beasts are sea-cattle,” replied Little Claus. “I’ll tell you the whole story, and thank you for drowning me. I am above you now; I am really very rich. I was frightened, to be sure, while I lay tied up in the sack, and the wind whistled in my ears when you threw me into the river from the bridge, and I sank to the bottom immediately, but I did not hurt myself, for I fell upon beautifully soft grass which grows down there, and in a moment the sack opened and the sweetest little maiden came toward me. She had snow-white robes and a wreath of green leaves on her wet hair. She took me by the hand and said, ‘So you are come, Little Claus, and here are some cattle for you to begin with. About a mile farther on the road there is another herd for you.’ Then I saw that the river formed a great highway for the people who live in the sea. They were walking and driving here and there from the sea to the land at the spot where the river terminates. The bed of the river was covered with the loveliest flowers and sweet, fresh grass. The fish swam past me

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as rapidly as the birds do here in the air. How handsome all the people were, and what fine cattle were grazing on the hills and in the valleys!"

"But why did you come up again," said Big Claus, "if it was all so beautiful down there? I should not have done so."

"Well," said Little Claus, "it was good policy on my part; you heard me say just now that I was told by the sea-maiden to go a mile farther on the road and I should find a whole herd of cattle. By the road she meant the river, for she could not travel any other way, but I knew the winding of the river, and how it bends, sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, and it seemed a long way, so I chose a shorter one, and by coming up to the land and then driving across the fields back again to the river I shall save half a mile and get all my cattle more quickly."

"What a lucky fellow you are!" exclaimed Big Claus. "Do you think I should get any sea-cattle if I went down to the bottom of the river?"

"Yes, I think so," said Little Claus; "but I cannot carry you there in a sack; you are too heavy. However, if you will go there first, and then creep into a sack, I will throw you in with the greatest pleasure."

"Thank you," said Big Claus; "but, remember, if I do not get any sea-cattle down there I shall come up again and give you a good thrashing."

"No, now, don't be too fierce about it!" said Little Claus, as they walked on toward the river. When they approached it the cattle, who were very thirsty, saw the stream and ran down to drink.

"See what a hurry they are in," said Little Claus; "they are longing to get down again."

"Come. Help me make haste," said Big Claus, "or you'll get beaten." So he crept into a large sack which had been lying across the back of one of the oxen. "Put in a stone," said Big Claus, "or I may not sink."

"Oh, there's not much fear of that," replied Little Claus; still

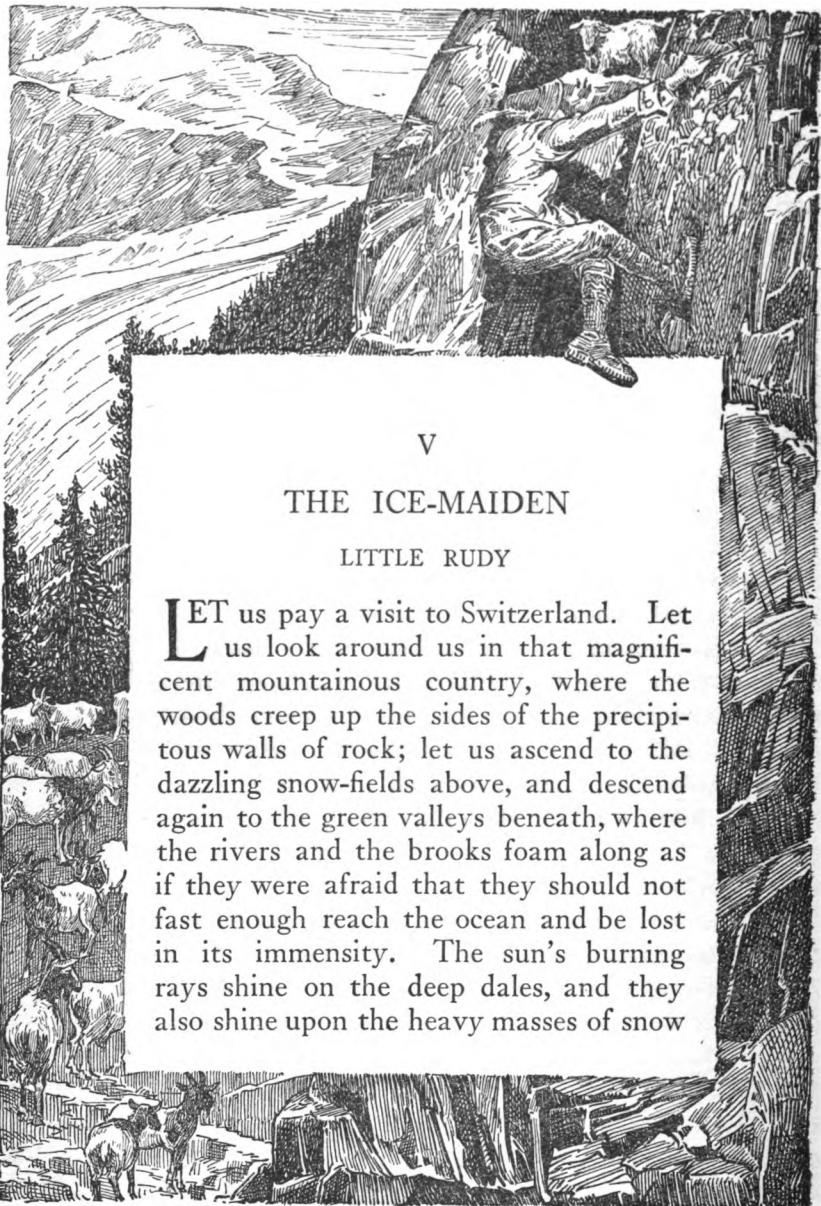
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he put a large stone into the bag and then tied it tightly and gave it a push.

“Plump!” In went Big Claus, and immediately sank to the bottom of the river.

“I’m afraid he will not find any cattle,” said Little Claus, and then he drove his own beasts homeward.





V

THE ICE-MAIDEN

LITTLE RUDY

LET us pay a visit to Switzerland. Let us look around us in that magnificent mountainous country, where the woods creep up the sides of the precipitous walls of rock; let us ascend to the dazzling snow-fields above, and descend again to the green valleys beneath, where the rivers and the brooks foam along as if they were afraid that they should not fast enough reach the ocean and be lost in its immensity. The sun's burning rays shine on the deep dales, and they also shine upon the heavy masses of snow

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above, so that the ice-blocks which have been accumulating for years melt and become rolling avalanches, piled-up glaciers. Two such lie in the broad mountain clefts under Schreckhorn and Wetterhorn, near the little mountain town of Grindelwald. They are wonderful to behold, and therefore in summer-time many strangers come here from every foreign land. They come over the lofty snow-covered hills; they come through the deep valleys, and thence for hours and hours they must mount; and always, as they ascend, the valleys seem to become deeper and deeper, until they appear as if viewed from a balloon high up in the air. The clouds often hang like thick, heavy curtains of smoke around the lofty mountain peaks, while down in the valley, where the many brown wooden houses lie scattered about, a bright ray of the sun may be shining, and bringing into strong relief some brilliant patch of green, making it look as if it were transparent. The waters foam and roar as they rush along below—they murmur and tinkle above. They look, up there, like silver ribbons streaming down over the rocks.

On both sides of the ascending road lie wooden houses. Each house has its little potato-garden; and this is a necessity, for with indoors yonder are many mouths—the houses are crammed with children, and children often waste their food. From all the cottages they sally forth in swarms and throng round travelers, whether these are on foot or in carriages. The whole troop of children are little merchants—they offer for sale charming toy wooden houses, models of the dwellings one sees here among the mountains. Whether it be fair weather or foul, the crowds of children issue forth with their wares.

Some twenty years ago occasionally stood here, but always at a short distance from the other children, a little boy who was also ready to engage in trade. He stood with an earnest, grave expression of countenance, and holding his deal box fast with both hands as if he were afraid of losing it. The very earnestness of his face and his being such a little fellow caused him to be remarked and called forward, so that he often sold the most—he did not himself know why. Higher up among the hills lived

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his maternal grandfather, who cut out the neat, pretty houses, and in a room up yonder was an old press full of all sorts of things—nut-crackers, knives, forks, boxes with prettily carved leaf-work, and springing chamois: there was everything to please a child's eye. But the little Rudy, as he was called, looked with greater interest and longing at the old firearms and other weapons which were hung up under the beams of the roof. "He should have them some day," said his grandfather, "when he was big enough and strong enough to make use of them." Young as the boy was, he was set to take care of the goats, and he who had to clamber after them was obliged to keep a good lookout and to be a good climber. And Rudy *was* an excellent climber; he even went higher than the goats, for he was fond of seeking for birds'-nests up among the tops of the trees. Bold and adventurous he was, but no one ever saw him smile except when he stood near the roaring cataract or heard the thunder of a rolling avalanche. He never played with the other children—he never went near them, except when his grandfather sent him down to sell the things he made. And Rudy did not care much for that; he preferred scrambling about among the mountains or sitting at home with his grandfather and hearing him tell stories of olden days and of the people near by at Meyringen, whence he came. "This tribe had not been settled there from the earliest ages of the world," he said; "they were wanderers from afar; they had come from the distant north, where their race still dwelt, and were called 'Swedes.'" This was a great deal for Rudy to learn, but he learned more from other sources, and these were the animals domiciled in the house. One was a large dog, Ajola, a legacy from Rudy's father; the other a tom-cat. Rudy had much for which to thank the latter—he had taught him to climb.

"Come out upon the roof with me!" the Cat had said, distinctly and intelligibly; for when one is a young child, and can scarcely speak, fowls and ducks, cats and dogs, are almost as easily understood as the language that fathers and mothers use. One must be very little indeed then, however; it is the time

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when grandpapa's stick neighs and becomes a horse with head, legs, and tail.

Some children retain these infantine thoughts longer than others; and of these it is said that they are very backward, exceedingly stupid children—people say so much!

“Come out upon the roof with me, little Rudy!” was one of the first things the Cat said, and Rudy understood him.

“It is all nonsense to fancy one must fall down; you won't fall unless you are afraid. Come! set one of your paws here, the other there, and take care of yourself with the rest of your paws! Keep a sharp lookout, and be active in your limbs! If there be a hole, spring over it, and keep a firm footing as I do.”

And so also did little Rudy; often and often he sat on the shelving roof of the house with the Cat; often, too, on the tops of the trees; but he sat also higher up among the towering rocks, which the Cat did not frequent.

“Higher! higher!” said the Trees and the Bushes. “Do you not see how we climb up—to what height we go, and how fast we hold on, even among the narrowest points of rock?”

And Rudy gained the top of the hill earlier than the sun had gained it; and there he took his morning draught, the fresh, invigorating mountain air—that drink which only our Lord can prepare, and which mankind pronounces to be the early fragrance from the mountain herbs and the wild thyme and mint in the valley. All that is heavy the overhanging clouds absorb within themselves, and the winds carry them over the pine woods, while the spirit of fragrance becomes air—light and fresh; and this was Rudy's morning draught.

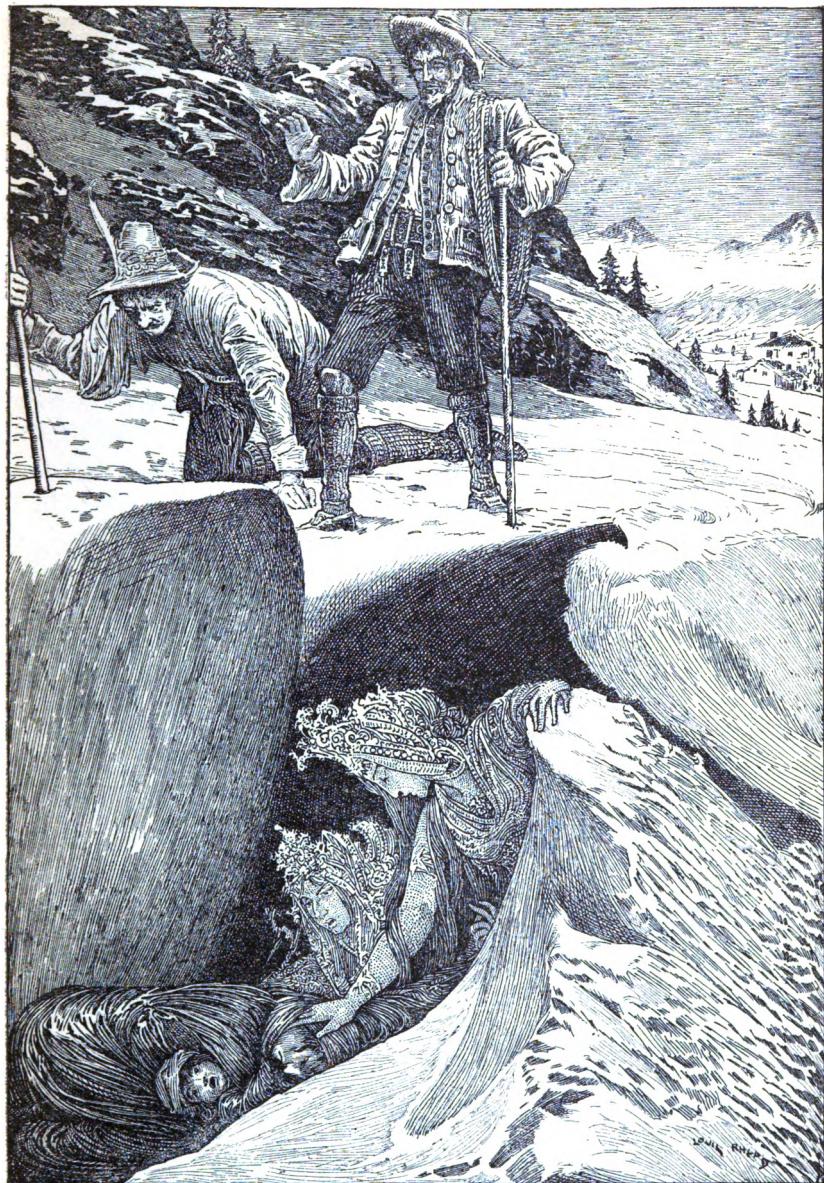
The sunbeams, those daughters of the sun, who bring blessings with them, kissed his cheeks; and dizziness stood near on the watch, but dared not approach him; and the swallows from his grandfather's house beneath (there were not less than seven nests) flew up to him and the goats, singing, “We and you, and you and we!” They brought him greetings from his home, even from the two hens, the only birds in the establishment, though Rudy was not intimate with them.

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Young as he was, he had traveled, and traveled a good deal for such a little fellow. He was born in the Canton Valais, and brought thence over the hills. He had visited on foot Staubbach, that seems like a silver veil to flutter before the snow-clad, glittering white mountain Jungfrau. And he had been at the great glaciers near Grindelwald, but that was connected with a sad event; his mother had found her death there, and there, his grandfather used to say, "little Rudy had got all his childish merriment knocked out of him." Before the child was a year old "he laughed more than he cried," his mother had written; but from the time that he fell into the crevasse in the ice his disposition had entirely changed. The grandfather did not say much about this in general, but the whole hill knew the fact.

Rudy's father had been a postilion, and the large dog who now shared Rudy's home had always accompanied him in his journeys over the Simplon down to the Lake of Geneva. Rudy's kindred on his father's side lived in the valley of the Rhone in the Canton Valais; his uncle was a celebrated chamois-hunter and a well-known Alpine guide. Rudy was not more than a year old when he lost his father; and his mother was anxious to return with her child to her own family in the Bernese Oberland. Her father dwelt at the distance of a few hours' journey from Grindelwald; he was a carver in wood, and he made so much by this that he was very well off.

Carrying her infant in her arms, she set out homeward in the month of June, in company with two chamois-hunters, over the Gemmi to reach Grindelwald. They had accomplished the greater portion of the journey, had crossed the highest ridges to the snow-fields, and could already see her native valley with all its well-known scattered brown cottages; they had now only the labor of going over the upper part of one great glacier. The snow had recently fallen and concealed a crevasse—not one so deep as to reach to the abyss below where the water foamed along, but deeper far than the height of any human being. The young woman, who was carrying her infant, slipped, sank in, and



NOTHING BUT THE CRYING OF A LITTLE CHILD

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suddenly disappeared; not a shriek, not a groan was heard—nothing but the crying of a little child. Upward of an hour elapsed before her two companions were able to obtain from the nearest house ropes and poles to assist them in extricating her; and it was with much difficulty and labor that they brought up from the crevasse two dead bodies, as they thought. Every means of restoring animation was employed, and they were successful in recalling the child to life, but not the mother; and so the old grandfather received into his house, not a daughter, but a daughter's son—the little one "who laughed more than he cried." But a change seemed to have come over him since he had been in the glacier-spalten—in the cold underground ice-world, where the souls of the condemned are imprisoned until Doomsday, as the Swiss peasants assert.

Not unlike a rushing stream, frozen and pressed into blocks of green crystal, lies the glacier, one great mass of ice balanced upon another; in the depths beneath tears along the accumulating stream of melted ice and snow; deep hollows, immense crevasses yawn within it. A wondrous palace of crystal it is, and in it dwells the Ice-maiden—the queen of the glaciers. She, the slayer, the crusher, is half the mighty ruler of the rivers, half a child of the air; therefore she is able to soar to the highest haunts of the chamois, to the loftiest peaks of the snow-covered hills, where the boldest mountaineer has to cut footsteps for himself in the ice; she sails on the slightest sprig of the pine-tree over the raging torrents below, and bounds lightly from one mass of ice to another, with her long snow-white hair fluttering about her and her bluish-green robe shining like the water in the deep Swiss lakes.

"To crush—to hold fast—such power is mine!" she cries. "Yet a beautiful boy was snatched from me—a boy whom I had kissed, but not kissed to death. He is again among mankind; he tends the goats upon the mountain heights; he is always climbing higher and higher still, away, away from other human beings, but not from me! He is mine—I wait for him!"

And she commanded Vertigo to undertake the mission. It

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was in summer-time; the Ice-maiden was melting in the green valley where the green mint grew, and Vertigo mounted and dived. Vertigo has several sisters, quite a flock of them, and the Ice-maiden selected the strongest among the many who exercise their power within doors and without—those who sit on the banisters of steep staircases and the outer rails of lofty towers, who bound like squirrels along the mountain ridges, and, springing thence, tread the air as the swimmer treads the water, and lure their victims onward, down to the abyss beneath.

Vertigo and the Ice-maiden both grasped after mankind, as the polypus grasps after all that comes within its reach. Vertigo was to seize Rudy.

"Seize him, indeed!" cried Vertigo. "I cannot do it! That good-for-nothing Cat has taught him its art. Yon child of the human race possesses a power within himself which keeps me at a distance. I cannot reach the little urchin when he hangs from the branches out over the depths below, or I would willingly loosen his hold and send him whirling down through the air. But I cannot."

"We must seize him, though!" said the Ice-maiden. "Either you or I! I will—I will!"

"No, no!" broke upon the air, like a mountain echo of the church-bells' peal; but it was a whisper, it was a song, it was the liquid tones of a chorus from other spirits of Nature—mild, soft, and loving, the daughters of the rays of the sun. They station themselves every evening in a circle upon the mountain peaks, and spread out their rose-tinted wings, which, as the sun sinks, become redder and redder until the lofty Alps seems all in a blaze. Men call this the Alpine glow. When the sun has sunk they retire within the white snow on the crests of the hills and sleep there until sunrise, when they come forth again. Much do they love flowers, butterflies, and mankind; and among the latter they had taken a great fancy for little Rudy.

"You shall not imprison him—you shall not get him!" they sang.

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“Greater and stronger have I seized and imprisoned,” said the Ice-maiden.

Then sang the daughters of the sun of the wanderer whose hat the whirlwind tore from his head and carried away in its stormy flight. The wind could take his cap, but not the man himself—no, it could make him tremble with its violence, but it could not sweep him away. “The human race is stronger and more ethereal even than we are; they alone may mount higher than even the sun, our parent. They know the magic words that can rule the wind and the waves so that they are compelled to obey and to serve them. You loosen the heavy, oppressive weight, and they soar upward.”

Thus sang the sweet tones of the bell-like chorus.

And every morning the sun’s rays shone through the one little window in the grandfather’s house upon the quiet child. The daughters of the rays of the sun kissed him—they wished to thaw, to obliterate the ice-kiss that the queenly maiden of the glaciers had given him when, in his dead mother’s lap, he lay in the deep crevasse of ice from which almost as by a miracle he had been rescued.



THE JOURNEY TO THE NEW HOME

RUDY was now eight years of age. His father's brother, who lived in the valley of the Rhone, on the other side of the mountain, wished to have the boy, as he could be better educated and taught to do for himself there; so also thought the grandfather, and he therefore agreed to part with him.

The time for Rudy's departure drew nigh. There were many more to take leave of than only his grandfather. First there was Ajola, the old dog.

"Your father was the postilion, and I was the postilion's dog," said Ajola. "We have often journeyed up and down, and I know both dogs and men on both sides of the mountains. It has not been my habit to speak much, but now that we shall have so short a time for conversation I will say a little more than usual, and will relate to you something upon which I have ruminated a great deal. I cannot understand it, nor can you; but that is of no consequence. But I have gathered this from it—that the good things of this world are not dealt out equally either to dogs or to mankind; all are not born to lie in laps or to drink milk. I have never been accustomed to such indulgences. But I have seen a whelp of a little dog traveling in the inside of a

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post-chaise, occupying a man's or a woman's seat, and the lady to whom he belonged, or whom he governed, carried a bottle of milk, from which she helped him; she also offered him sponge-cakes, but he would not condescend to eat them; he only sniffed at them, so she ate them herself. I was running in the sun by the side of the carriage, as hungry as a dog could be, but *I* had only to chew the cud of bitter reflection. Things were not so justly meted out as they might have been—but when are they? May you come to drive in carriages and lie in Fortune's lap; but you can't bring all this about yourself. *I* never could, either by barking or growling."

This was Ajola's discourse; and Rudy threw his arms round his neck and kissed him on his wet mouth; and then he caught up the Cat in his arms, but the animal was angry at this, and exclaimed: "You are getting too strong for me, but I will not use my claws against you. Scramble away over the mountains—I have taught you how to do so; never think of falling, but hold fast, have no fear, and you will be safe enough."

And the Cat sprang down and ran off, for he did not wish Rudy to see how sorry he was.

The hens hopped upon the floor; one of them had lost her tail, for a traveler, who chose to play the sportsman, had shot off her tail, mistaking the poor fowl for a bird of prey.

Rudy is going over the hills," murmured one of the hens.

"He is in a hurry," said the other, "and I don't like the leave-takings"; and they both hopped out.

The goats also bleated their farewells, and very sorry they were.

Just at that time there were two active guides about to cross the mountains; they proposed descending the other side of the Gemmi, and Rudy was to accompany them on foot. It was a long and laborious journey for such a little fellow, but he had a good deal of strength and had courage that was indomitable.

The swallows flew a little way with him, and sang to him, "We and you, and you and we!"

The travelers' path led across the rushing Lütschine, which in numerous small streams falls from the dark clefts of the

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Grindelwald glaciers. The trunks of fallen trees and fragments of rock serve here as bridges. They had soon passed the thicket of alders, and commenced to ascend the mountain, close to where the glaciers had loosened themselves from the side of the hill; and they went upon the glacier over the blocks of ice and round them.

Rudy crept here and walked there, his eyes sparkling with joy as he firmly placed his iron-tipped mountain-shoe wherever he could find footing for it. The small patches of black earth, which the mountain torrents had cast upon the glacier, imparted to it a burned appearance, but still the bluish-green, glass-like ice shone out visibly. They had to go round the little pools which were dammed up, as it were, amidst detached masses of ice; and in this circuitous route they approached an immense stone which lay rocking on the edge of a crevasse in the ice. The stone lost its equipoise, toppled over, and rolled down, and the echo of its thundering fall resounded faintly from the glacier's deep abyss, far, far beneath.

Upward, always upward, they journeyed on; the glacier itself stretched upward, like a continued stream of masses of ice piled up in wild confusion, amidst bare and rugged rocks. Rudy remembered for a moment what had been told him—that he, with his mother, had lain buried in one of these cold, mysterious fissures, but he soon threw off such gloomy thoughts and only looked upon the tale as one among the many fables he had heard. Once or twice, when the men with whom he was traveling thought that it was rather difficult for so little a boy to mount up, they held out their hands to help him, but he never needed any assistance, and he stood upon the glacier as securely as if he had been a chamois itself.

Now they came upon rocky ground, sometimes amidst mossy stones, sometimes amidst low pine-trees, and again out upon the green pastures—always changing, always new. Around them towered lofty snow-clad mountains, those of which every child in the neighborhood knows the names—Jungfrau, the Monk, and Eiger.

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Rudy had never before been so far from his home, never before beheld the wide-spreading ocean of snow that lay with its immovable billows of ice, from which the wind occasionally swept little clouds of powdery snow, as it sweeps the scum from the waves of the sea. Glacier stretched close to glacier—one might have said they were hand in hand; and each is a crystal palace belonging to the Ice-maiden, whose pleasure and occupation it is to seize and imprison her victims.

The sun was shining warmly, and the snow dazzled the eyes as if it had been strewn with flashing pale-blue diamond sparks. Innumerable insects, especially butterflies and bees, lay dead in masses on the snow; they had winged their way too high, or else the wind had carried them upward to the regions, for them, of cold and death. Around Wetterhorn hung what might be likened to a large tuft of very fine dark wool, a threatening cloud; it sank, bulging out with what it had concealed in itself—a *fohn*,¹ fearfully violent in its might when it should break loose.

The whole of this journey—the night quarters above, the wild track, the mountain clefts where the water during an incalculably long period of time had penetrated through the blocks of stone—made an indelible impression upon little Rudy's mind.

A forsaken stone building beyond the sea of snow gave the travelers shelter for the night. Here they found some charcoal and branches of pine-trees. A fire was soon kindled, couches of some kind were arranged as well as they could be, and the men placed themselves near the blazing fire, took out their tobacco, and began to drink the warm spiced beverage they had prepared for themselves, nor did they forget to give some to Rudy.

The conversation fell upon the mysterious beings who haunt the Alpine land; upon the strange gigantic snakes in the deep lakes—the night folks—the specter host, that carry sleepers off through the air to the wonderful, almost floating city of Venice—the wild herdsman, who drives his black sheep over the green pastures; if these had not been seen, the sound of their bells had

¹ *Fohn*, a humid south wind on the Swiss mountains and lakes, the forerunner of a storm.—*Translator.*

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undoubtedly been heard, and the frightful noise made by the phantom herds.

Rudy listened with intense curiosity to these superstitious tales, but without any fear, for *that* he did not know; and while he listened he fancied that he heard the uproar of the wild spectral herd. Yes, it became more and more distinct; the men heard it, too. They were awed into silence; and as they harkened to the unearthly noise they whispered to Rudy that he must not sleep.

It was a *John* that had burst forth—that violent tempestuous wind which issues downward from the mountains into the valley beneath, and in its fury snaps large trees as if they were but reeds, and carries the wooden houses from one bank of a river to the other as we would move men on a chess-board.

After an hour had elapsed Rudy was told that it was all over and he might now go to sleep safely; and, weary with his long walk, he did sleep, as if in duty bound to do so.

At a very early hour in the morning the party set off again. The sun that day lighted up for Rudy new mountains, new glaciers, and new snow-fields. They had entered the Canton Valais, and were upon the other side of the ridge of hills seen from Grindelwald, yet still far from his new home.

Other mountain clefts, other pastures, other woods, and other hilly paths unfolded themselves; other houses, and other people, too, Rudy saw. But what kind of human beings were these? The outcasts of fate they were, with frightful, disgusting, yellowish faces, and necks of which the hideous flesh hung down like bags. They were the cretins—poor, diseased wretches, dragging themselves along and looking with stupid, lusterless eyes upon the strangers who crossed their path—the women even more disgusting than the men. Were such the persons who surrounded his new home?

THE UNCLE

IN his uncle's house, when Rudy arrived there, he saw, and he thanked God for it, people such as he had been accustomed to

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see. There was only one cretin there, a poor idiotic lad, one of those unfortunate beings who, in their poverty—in fact, in their utter destitution—go by turns to different families and remain a month or two in each house. Poor Saperli happened to be in his uncle's house when Rudy arrived.

The uncle was a bold and experienced hunter, and was also a cooper by trade; his wife a lively little woman, with a face something like that of a bird, eyes like those of an eagle, and a long skinny throat.

Everything was new to Rudy—the dress, customs, employments, even the language itself, but his childish ear would soon learn to understand that. The contrast between his home at his grandfather's and his uncle's abode was very favorable to the latter. The house was larger; the walls were adorned by horns of the chamois and brightly polished guns; a painting of the Virgin Mary hung over the door, and fresh Alpine roses, and a lamp that was kept always burning, were placed before it.

His uncle, as has been told, was one of the most renowned chamois-hunters of the district, and was also one of the best and most experienced of the guides.

Rudy became the pet of the house; but there was another pet as well—a blind, lazy old hound, who could no longer be of any use; but he *had been* useful, and the worth of the animal in his earlier days was remembered, and he therefore now lived as one of the family and had every comfort. Rudy patted the dog, but the animal did not like strangers, and as yet Rudy was a stranger; but he soon won every heart and became as one of themselves.

“Things don't go so badly in Canton Valais,” said his uncle. “We have plenty of chamois; they do not die off so fast as the wild he-goats; matters are much better nowadays than in old times, although they *are* so bepraised. A hole is burst in the bag, and we have a current of air now in our confined valley. Something better always starts up when antiquated things are done away with.”

The uncle became quite chatty and discoursed to the boy of the events of his own boyhood and those of his father. Valais

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was then, as he called it, only a receptacle for sick people—miserable cretins; “but the French soldiers came, and they made capital doctors; they soon killed the disease, and the patients with it. They know how to strike—aye, how to strike in many ways—and the girls could smite, too!” And thereupon the uncle nodded to his wife, who was of French descent, and laughed. “The French could split solid stones if they chose. It was they who cut out of the rocks the road over the Simplon—yes, cut such a road that I could say to a child of three years of age, Go down to Italy! You have but to keep to the highroad, and you find yourself there.” The good man then sang a French *chanson*, and wound up by shouting “Hurrah!” for Napoleon Bonaparte.

It was the first time that Rudy had ever heard of France, and he was interested in hearing of it, especially Lyons, that great city on the river Rhone, where his uncle had been.

The uncle prophesied that Rudy would become in a few years a smart chamois-hunter, as he had quite a talent for it. He taught the boy to hold, load, and fire a gun; he took him up with him in the hunting-season among the hills and made him drink of the warm chamois’ blood to ward off giddiness from the hunter; he taught him to know the time when, upon the different sides of the mountains, avalanches were about to fall, at midday or in the evening, whenever the sun’s rays took effect; he taught him to notice the movements of the chamois, and learn their spring, so that he might alight on his feet and stand firmly, and told him that if on the fissures of the rock there was no footing he must support himself by his elbows, and exert the muscles of his thighs and the calves of his legs to hold on fast. Even the neck could be made of use if necessary.

The chamois are cunning, and place outposts on the watch, but the hunter must be more cunning and scent them out. Sometimes he might cheat them by hanging up his hat and coat on an Alpine staff, and the chamois would mistake the coat for the man. This trick the uncle played one day when he was out hunting with Rudy.

The mountain pass was narrow; indeed, there was scarcely a

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path at all, scarcely more than a slight cornice close to the yawning abyss. The snow that lay there was partially thawed, and the stones crumbled away whenever they were trod on. So the uncle laid himself down his full length and crept forward. Every fragment of stone that broke off fell, rolling and knocking from one side of the rocky wall to another, until it sank to rest in the dark depths below. About a hundred paces behind his uncle stood Rudy, upon the verge of the last point of solid rock, and as he stood he saw careering through the air, and hovering just over his uncle, an immense lammergeier, which, with the tremendous stroke of its wing, would speedily cast the creeping worm into the abyss beneath, there to prey upon his carcass.

The uncle had eyes for nothing but the chamois, which, with its young kid, had appeared on the other side of the crevasse. Rudy was watching the bird; well did he know what was its aim, and therefore he kept his hand on the gun to fire the moment it might be necessary. Just then the chamois made a bound upward; Rudy's uncle fired, and the animal was hit by the deadly bullet, but the kid escaped as cleverly as if it had had a long life's experience in danger and flight. The enormous bird, frightened by the loud report, wheeled off in another direction, and the uncle was freed from a danger of which he was quite unconscious until he was told of it by Rudy.

As in high good humor they were wending their way homeward, and the uncle was humming an air he remembered from his childish days, they suddenly heard a peculiar noise which seemed to come from no great distance. They looked round on both sides; they looked upward, and there, in the heights above, on the sloping verge of the mountain, the heavy covering of snow was lifted up, and it heaved as a sheet of linen stretched out heaves when the wind creeps under it. The lofty mass cracked as if it had been a marble slab; it broke and, resolving itself into a foaming cataract, came rushing down with a rumbling noise like that of distant thunder. It was an avalanche that had fallen, not indeed over Rudy and his uncle, but near them—all too near!

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"Hold fast, Rudy—hold fast with all your might!" cried his uncle.

And Rudy threw his arms around the trunk of a tree that was close by, while his uncle climbed above him and held fast to the branches of the tree. The avalanche rolled past at a little distance from them, but the gust of wind that swept like the tail of a hurricane after it rattled around the trees and bushes, snapped them asunder as if they had been but dry rushes, and cast them down in all directions. Rudy was dashed to the ground, for the trunk of the tree to which he had clung was thus overthrown; the upper part was flung to a great distance. There, amidst the shattered branches, lay his poor uncle with his skull fractured! His hand was still warm, but it would have been impossible to recognize his face. Rudy stood pale and trembling; it was the first shock in his young life, the first moment he had ever felt terror.

Late in the evening he reached his home with the fatal tidings—his home which was now to be the abode of sorrow. The bereaved wife stood like a statue—she did not utter a word, she did not shed a tear, and it was not until the corpse was brought in that her grief found its natural vent. The poor cretin stole away to his bed, and nothing was seen of him during the whole of the next day; toward evening he came to Rudy.

"Will you write a letter for me?" he asked. "Saperli cannot write—Saperli can only go down to the post-office with the letter."

"A letter for you?" exclaimed Rudy; "and to whom?"

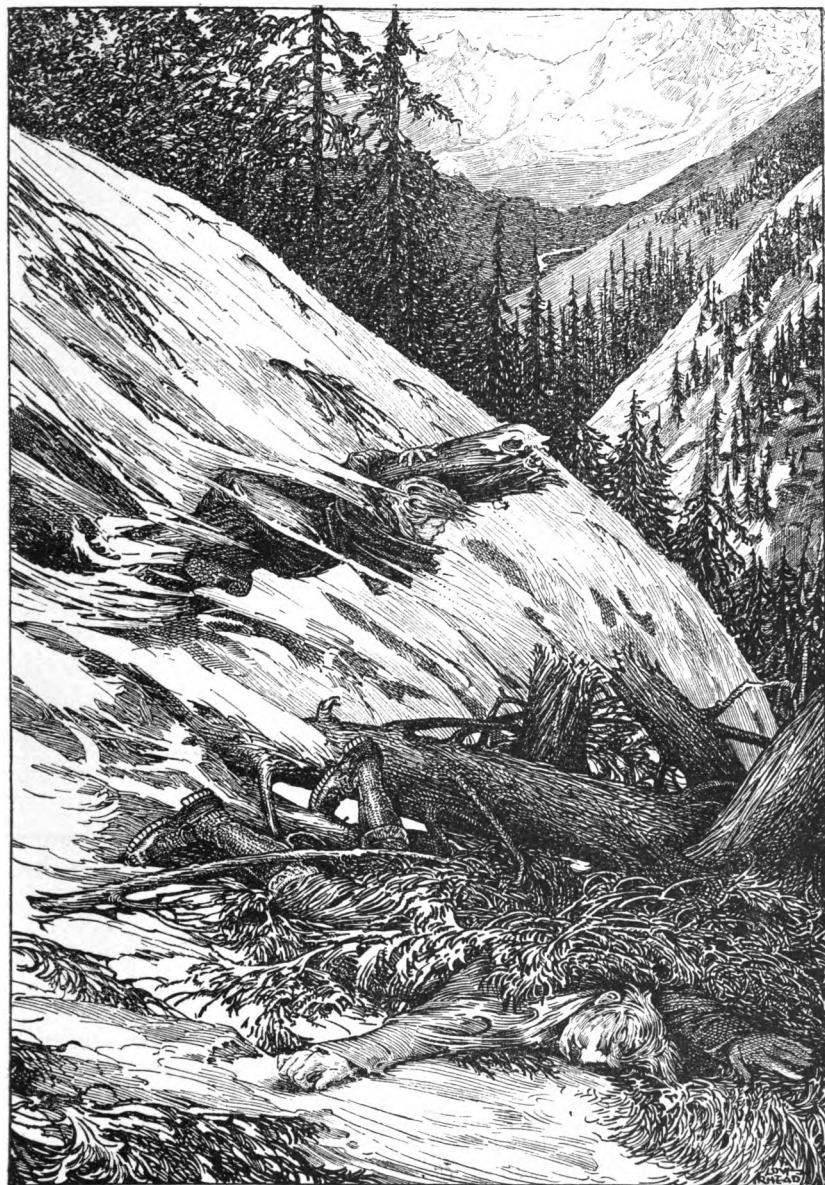
"To our Lord Christ!"

"Whom do you mean?"

And the half-idiot, as the cretin was called, looked with a most touching expression at Rudy, clasped his hands, and said, solemnly and reverentially:

"Jesus Christ! Saperli would send Him a letter to pray of Him that Saperli may lie dead, and not the good master of the house here."

And Rudy took his hand and wrung it. "That letter would



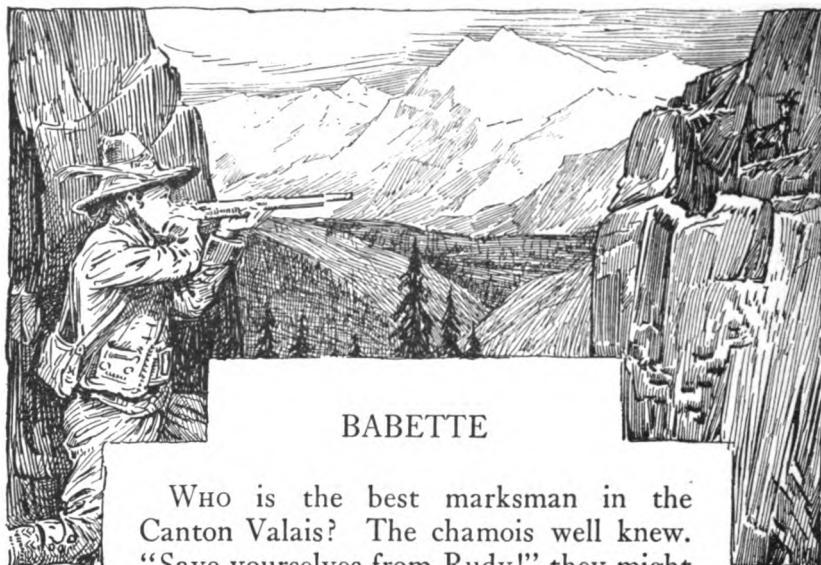
AMID THE SHATTERED BRANCHES LAY HIS POOR UNCLE

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not reach up yonder; that letter would not restore to us him we have lost."

But Rudy found it very difficult to convince Saperli of the impossibility of his wishes.

"Now you must be the support of the house," said his aunt to him; and Rudy became such.



BABETTE

WHO is the best marksman in the Canton Valais? The chamois well knew. "Save yourselves from Rudy!" they might have said. And "Who is the handsomest marksman?" "Oh, it is Rudy!" said the girls. But they did not add, "Save yourselves from Rudy"; neither did the sober mothers say so, for he bowed as politely to them as to the young girls. He was so brave and so joyous, his cheeks so brown, his teeth so white, his dark eyes so sparkling. A handsome young man he was, and only twenty years of age. The most ice-chill water never seemed too cold for him when he was swimming; in fact, he was like a fish in the water; he could climb better than any one else; he could also cling fast like a snail to the wall of rock. There were good muscles and sinews in him; this was quite evident whenever he made a spring. He had learned first from the cat how to spring, and from the chamois afterward. Rudy had the reputation of being the best guide on the mountain, and he could have made a great deal of money by this occupation. His uncle had also taught him the cooper's trade, but he had no inclination for that. He cared for nothing but chamois-hunting; in this he delighted, and it also brought in money. Rudy would be an excellent match, it was said, if he only did not look too high. He was such a good dancer that the girls who were his partners often dreamed

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of him, and more than one let her thoughts dwell on him even after she awoke.

“He kissed me in the dance!” said Annette, the schoolmaster’s daughter, to her dearest friend; but she should not have said this even to her dearest friend. Such secrets are seldom kept; like sand in a bag that has holes, they ooze out. Therefore, however well behaved Rudy might be, it was soon spread about that he kissed in the dance; and yet he had never kissed her whom he would have liked to kiss.

“Take care of him!” said an old hunter. “He has kissed Annette. He has begun with A, and he will kiss through the whole alphabet.”

A kiss in the dance was all that the gossips could find to bring against Rudy; but he certainly had kissed Annette, and yet she was not the flower of his heart.

Below at Bex, amidst the great walnut-trees, close to a small rushing mountain stream, lived the rich Miller. His dwelling-house was a large building three stories high, with small turrets; its roof was composed of shavings of wood covered with tinned iron plates, which shone in sunshine and moonshine; on the highest turret was a vane, a glittering arrow passed through an apple, in allusion to Tell’s celebrated arrow-shot. The mill was a conspicuous object, and permitted itself to be sketched or written about; but the Miller’s daughter did not permit herself to be described in writing or to be sketched—so at least Rudy would have said. And yet her image was engraved on his heart; both her eyes blazed in on it so that it was quite in flames. The fire had, like other fires, come on suddenly; and the strangest part of it was that the Miller’s daughter, the charming Babette, was quite ignorant of it, for she and Rudy had never so much as spoken two words to each other.

The Miller was rich, and on account of his wealth Babette was rather high to aspire to. “But nothing is so high,” said Rudy to himself, “that one may not aspire to it. One must climb perseveringly, and if one has confidence one does not fall.” He had received this teaching in his early home.

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It so happened that Rudy had some business to transact at Bex. It was a long journey to that place, for there was then no railroad. From the glaciers of the Rhone, immediately at the foot of the Simplon, among many and often shifting mountain peaks, stretches the broad valley of the Canton Valais, with its mighty river, the Rhone, whose waters are often so swollen as to overflow its banks, inundating fields and roads and destroying all. Between the towns of Sion and St. Maurice the valley takes a turn, bending like an elbow, and below St. Maurice becomes so narrow that there is only space for the bed of the river and the confined carriage-road. An old tower, like the guardian of the Canton Valais, which ends here, stands on the side of the mountain and commands a view over the stone bridge to the custom-house on the other side, where the Canton Vaud commences; and nearest of the not very distant towns lies Bex. In this part, at every step forward, are displayed increased fruitfulness and abundance; one enters, as it were, a grove of chestnut and walnut trees. Here and there peep forth cypresses and pomegranates. It is almost as warm there as in Italy.

Rudy reached Bex, got through his business, and looked about him; but not a soul (putting Babette out of the question) belonging to the mill did he see. This was not what he wanted.

Evening came on; the air was filled with the perfume of the wild thyme and the blossoming lime-trees; there lay what seemed a shining sky-blue veil over the wooded green hills; a stillness reigned around, not the stillness of sleep, not the stillness of death; no, it was as if all nature was holding its breath in order that its image might be photographed upon the blue surface of the heavens above. Here and there amidst the trees stood poles, or posts, which conveyed the wires of the telegraph along the silent valley; close against one of these leaned an object, so motionless that one might have thought it was the decayed trunk of a tree; but it was Rudy, who was standing there as still as was all around him at that moment. He was not sleeping, neither was he dead; but, as through the wires of the telegraph there are often transmitted the great events of the

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world and matters of the utmost importance to individuals without the wires by the slightest tremor or the faintest tone betraying them, so there passed through Rudy's mind anxious, overwhelming thoughts fraught with the happiness of his future life, and constituting from this time forth his one unchanging aim. His eyes were fixed on one point before him, and that was a light in the parlor of the Miller's house, where Babette resided. Rudy stood so still that one might have thought he was on the watch to fire at a chamois; but he was himself at that moment like a chamois, which one minute could stand as if it were chiseled out of the rock, and suddenly, if a stone but rolled past, would make a spring and leave the hunter in the lurch. And thus did Rudy, for a thought rolled through his mind.

"Never despair!" said he. "A visit to the mill, say good evening to the miller, and good day to Babette. One does not fall unless one fears to do so. If I am to be Babette's husband she must see me some day or other."

And Rudy laughed and made up his mind to go to the Miller's; he knew what he wanted, and that was to marry Babette.

The stream, with its yellowish-white water, was dashing on; the willows and lime-trees hung over it. Rudy, as it stands in the old nursery rhyme,

Found to the miller's house his way;
But there was nobody at home,
Except a pussy cat at play!

The cat, which was standing on the steps, put up its back and mewed; but Rudy was no way inclined to listen to it. He knocked at the door; no one seemed to hear him, no one answered. The cat mewed again. Had Rudy been still a little boy he might have understood the cat's language and heard that it said, "No one is at home." But now he had to go to the mill to make the necessary inquiries, and there he was told that the master had gone on a long journey to the town of Interlaken—"Inter Lacus, amidst the lakes," as the school-master, Annette's father, in his great learning had explained the name.

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Ah! so far away, then, were the Miller and Babette? There was a great shooting-match to be held at Interlaken; it was to begin the next morning and to last for eight days. The Swiss from all the German cantons were to assemble there.

Poor Rudy! It was not a fortunate time for him to have come to Bex. He had only to return again; and he did so, taking the road over St. Maurice and Sion to his own valley, his own hills. But he was not disheartened. When the sun rose next morning he was in high spirits, but indeed they had never been depressed.

"Babette is at Interlaken, a journey of many days from this," he said to himself. "It is a long way off if one goes by the circuitous highroad, but not so far if one cuts across the mountains, and that way just suits a chamois-hunter. I have gone that way before; over yonder lies my early home, where as a little boy I lived with my grandfather. And there are shooting-matches; I shall take my place as the first there, and there also shall I be with Babette, when I become acquainted with her."

Carrying his light knapsack, with his Sunday finery in it, with his musket and game-bag, Rudy went up the mountain, the shortest way, yet still tolerably long; but the shooting-matches were only to commence that day and were to continue for a week. During all that time, he had been assured, the Miller and Babette would stay with their relatives at Interlaken. So over the Gemmi trudged Rudy; he proposed descending near Grindelwald.

In high health and spirits he set off, enjoying the fresh, pure, and invigorating mountain air. The valleys sank deeper, the horizon became more extensive; here a snow-crested summit, there another, and speedily the whole of the bright shining Alpine range became visible. Rudy knew well every ice-clad peak. He kept his course opposite to Schreckhorn, which raised its white-powdered stone finger high toward the blue vault above.

At length he had crossed the loftier mountain ridge. The pasture-lands sloped down toward the valley that was his former home. The air was pleasant, his thoughts were pleasant; hill and dale were blooming with flowers and verdure, and his heart

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was full of the glowing dreams of youth; he felt as if old age, as if death, were never to approach him; life, power, enjoyment were before him. Free as a bird, light as a bird was Rudy; and the swallows flew past him and sang as in the days of his childhood, "We and you, and you and we!" All was motion and pleasure.

Beneath lay the green-velvet meadows, dotted with brown wooden houses; the river Lütschine rushed foaming along. He saw the glacier with its borders like green glass edging the dirty snow, and he saw the deep chasms, while the sound of the church-bells came upon his ear, as if they were ringing a welcome to his old home. His heart beat rapidly, and his mind became so full of old recollections that for a moment he almost forgot Babette.

He was again traversing the same road where as a little boy he had stood along with other children to sell their carved wooden toy houses. Yonder, above the pine-trees, still stood his grandfather's house, but strangers dwelt there now. The children came running after him as formerly; they wished to sell their little wares. One of them offered him an Alpine rose; Rudy took it as a good omen and thought of Babette. He had soon crossed the bridge where the two Lütschines unite, and reached the smiling country where the walnut and other embowering trees afford grateful shade. He soon perceived waving flags, and beheld the white cross on the red ground—the standard of the Swiss as of the Danes—and before him lay Interlaken.

Rudy thought it was certainly a splendid town—a Swiss town in its holiday dress. It was not, like other market-towns, a heap of heavy stone houses, stiff, foreign-looking, and aiming at grandeur; no! it looked as if the wooden houses from the hills above had taken a start into the green valley beneath, with its clear stream whose waters rushed swiftly as an arrow and had ranged themselves into rows, somewhat uneven, it is true, to form the street. And that prettiest of all, the street which had been built since Rudy as a little boy had last been there—that seemed to be composed of all the nicest wooden houses his grandfather had cut out, and with which the cupboard at home had been filled.

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These seemed to have transplanted themselves there and to have grown in size, as the old chestnut-trees had done.

Every house almost was a hotel, as it was called, with carved wooden work round the windows and balconies, with smart-looking roofs, and before each house a flower-garden, between it and the wide, macadamized highroad. Near these houses, but only on one side of the road, stood some other houses; had they formed a double row they would have concealed the fresh green meadow, where wandered the cows with bells that rang as among the high Alpine pastures. The valley was encircled by lofty hills which, about the center, seemed to retire a little to one side so as to render visible that glittering snow-white Jungfrau, the most beautiful in form of all the mountains of Switzerland.

What a number of gaily dressed gentlemen and ladies from foreign lands; what crowds of Swiss from the adjacent cantons! The candidates for the prizes carried the numbers of their shots in a garland round their hats. There was music of all kinds—singing, hand-organs, and wind instruments, shouting and racket. The houses and bridges were adorned with verses and emblems. Flags and banners waved; the firing of gun after gun was heard, and that was the best music to Rudy's ears. Amid all this excitement he almost forgot Babette, for whose sake only he had gone there.

Crowds were thronging to the target-shooting. Rudy was soon among them, and he was always the luckiest, the best shot, for he always struck the bull's-eye.

"Who is that young stranger—that capital marksman?" was asked around. "He speaks the French language as they speak it in the Canton Valais; he also expresses himself fluently in our German," said several people.

"When a child he lived here in the valley, near Grindelwald," replied some one.

The youth was full of fire; his eyes sparkled, his aim was steady, his arm sure, and therefore his shots always told. Good fortune bestows courage, and Rudy had always courage. He had soon a whole circle of friends round him. Every one noticed

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him; in short, he became the observed of all observers. Babette had almost vanished from his thoughts. Just then a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a rough voice accosted him in the French language with:

“You are from the Canton Valais?”

Rudy turned round and beheld a red, jolly countenance and a stout person. It was the rich Miller from Bex; his broad bulk hid the slender, lovely Babette, who, however, soon came forward with her dark, bright eyes. The rich Miller was very proud that it was a huntsman from his own canton that had been declared the best shot and was so much distinguished and so much praised. Rudy was truly the child of good fortune; what he had traveled so far to look for but had since his arrival nearly forgotten now sought him.

When at a distance from home one meets persons from thence, acquaintance is speedily made, and people speak as if they knew each other. Rudy held the first place at the shooting-matches, as the Miller held the first place at Bex, on account of his money and his mill. So the two men shook hands, although they had never met before; Babette, too, held out her hand frankly to Rudy, and he pressed it warmly and gazed with such admiration at her that she became scarlet.

The Miller talked of the long journey they had made and the numerous large towns they had seen, and how they had traveled both by steam and by post.

“I came the shorter way,” said Rudy; “I went over the mountains. There is no road so high that one cannot venture to take it.”

“Aye, at the risk of breaking one’s neck!” replied the Miller. “And you look just like one who will some day or other break his neck—you are so daring!”

“One does not fall unless one has the fear of doing so,” said Rudy.

And the Miller’s relations at Interlaken, with whom he and Babette were staying, invited Rudy to visit them, since he came from the same canton as did their kindred. It was a pleasant

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invitation for Rudy. Luck was with him, as it always is with those who depend upon themselves and remember that "Our Lord bestows nuts upon us, but He does not crack them for us!"

And Rudy sat, almost like one of the family, among the Miller's relations, and a toast was drunk in honor of the best shot, to which Rudy returned thanks after clinking glasses with Babette.

In the evening the whole party took a walk on the pretty avenue past the gay-looking hotels under the walnut-trees, and there was such a crowd and so much pushing that Rudy had to offer his arm to Babette. He told her how happy he was to have met people from the Canton Vaud, for Vaud and Valais were close neighbors. He spoke so cordially that Babette could not resist slightly squeezing his hand. They seemed almost like old acquaintances, and she was very lively—that pretty little girl. Rudy was much amused at her remarks on what was absurd and over-fine in the dress of the foreign ladies and the affectation of some of them; but she did not wish to ridicule them, for there might be some excellent people among them—yes, nice, amiable people, Babette was sure of that, for she had a god-mother who was a very superior English lady. Eighteen years before, when Babette was christened, that lady was at Bex; she had given Babette the valuable brooch she wore. Her god-mother had written to her twice, and this year they were to have met her at Interlaken, whither she was coming with her daughters; they were old maids, going on for thirty, said Babette—she herself was only eighteen.

The tongue in her pretty little mouth was not still for a moment, and all that she said appeared to Rudy as matters of the greatest importance. And he told her what he had to tell—told her how he had been to Bex, how well he knew the mill, and how often he had seen her, though, of course, she had never remarked him. He said he had been more distressed than he could tell when he found that she and her father were away, far away, but still not too far to prevent one from scrambling over the wall that made the road so long.

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He said all this, and he said a great deal more; he told her how much she occupied his thoughts, and that it was on her account, and not for the sake of the shooting-matches, that he had come to Interlaken.

Babette became very silent—it was almost too much, all that he confided to her.

As they walked on the sun sank behind the lofty heights and the Jungfrau stood in strong relief, clothed in a splendor and brilliancy reflected by the green woods of the surrounding hills. Every one stood still and gazed at it; Rudy and Babette also stood and looked at the magnificent scene.

“Nothing can be more beautiful than this!” said Babette.

“Nothing!” said Rudy, with his eyes fixed upon Babette.

“To-morrow I must go,” he added, a little after.

“Come and visit us at Bex,” whispered Babette; “my father will be so glad to see you.”



ON THE WAY HOME

OH, how much had not Rudy to carry next day when he started on his journey homeward over the mountains! He had actually to carry two handsome guns, three silver goblets, and a silver coffee-pot—the last would be of use when he set up a house. But these valuables were not the weightiest load he had to bear; a still weightier load he had to carry—or did it carry him?—over the high, high hills.

The road was rough; the weather was dismal, gloomy, and rainy; the clouds hung like a mourning-veil over the summits of the mountains and shrouded their shining peaks. From the woods had resounded the last stroke of the ax, and down the side of the hill rolled the trunks of the trees; they looked like sticks from the vast heights above, but nearer they were seen to be like the thick masts of ships. The river murmured with its monotonous sound, the wind whistled, the clouds began to sail hurriedly along.

Close by Rudy suddenly appeared a young girl; he had not observed her until she was quite near him. She also was going to cross the mountain. Her eyes had an extraordinary power; they seemed to have a spell in them, they were so clear, so deep, so unfathomable.

“Have you a lover?” asked Rudy. All his thoughts were filled with love.

“I have none,” she replied, with a laugh, but it seemed as

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if she did not speak the truth. "Let us not go the long way round. We must keep to the left; it is shorter."

"Yes, to fall into some crevasse," said Rudy. "You should know the paths better if you take upon yourself to be a guide."

"I know the way well," she rejoined, "and I have my wits about me. Your thoughts are down yonder in the valley. Up here one should think of the Ice-maiden. Mankind say that she is not friendly to their race."

"I am not in the least afraid of her," said Rudy. "She could not keep me when I was a child; she shall not catch me now I am a grown-up man."

It became very dark, the rain fell, and it began to snow heavily; it dazzled the eyes and blinded them.

"Give me your hand and I will help you to mount upward," said the girl, as she touched him with her ice-cold fingers.

"*You help me!*" cried Rudy. "I do not yet require a woman's help in climbing"; and he walked on more briskly away from her.

The snow-storm thickened like a curtain around him, the wind moaned, and behind him he heard the girl laughing and singing. It sounded so strangely. It was surely Glamourie, she surely, one of the attendants of the Ice-maiden; Rudy had heard of such things when as a little boy he had spent a night on the mountains, on his journey over the hills.

The snow fell more thickly; the clouds lay below him. He looked back; there was no one to be seen, but he heard laughter and jeering, and it did not seem to come from a human being.

When at length Rudy had reached the highest part of the mountain, where the path led down to the valley of the Rhone, he perceived on the pale blue of the horizon, in the direction of Chamouny, two glittering stars. They shone so brightly; and he thought of Babette, of himself, and of his happiness, and became warm with these thoughts.

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THE VISIT TO THE MILL

"You have really brought costly things home," said his old foster-mother; and her strange, eagle eyes sparkled, while she worked her thin, wrinkled neck even more quickly than usual. "You carry good luck with you, Rudy. I must kiss you, my dear boy."

Rudy allowed himself to be kissed, but it was evident by his countenance that he did not relish this domestic greeting.

"How handsome you are, Rudy!" exclaimed the old woman.

"Oh, don't flatter me," replied Rudy, laughing; but he was pleased at the compliment, nevertheless.

"I repeat it," said the old woman, "and good fortune smiles on you."

"Yes, I believe you are right there," he said, while his thoughts strayed to Babette.

Never before had he longed so much for the deep valley.

"They must have come back," he said to himself; "it is now more than two days over the time they fixed for their return. I must go to Bex."

And to Bex he went. The Miller and his daughter were at home; he was well received, and many greetings were given to him from the family at Interlaken. Babette did not speak much; she had become very silent. But her eyes spoke, and that was quite enough for Rudy. The Miller, who generally had enough to say and was accustomed to joke and have all his jokes laughed at, for he was *the rich Miller*, seemed to prefer listening to Rudy's stirring adventures and hearing him tell of all the difficulties and dangers that the chamois-hunter had to encounter on the mountain heights—how he had to crawl along the unsafe snowy cornice-work on the edges of the hills, which was attached to the rocks by the force of the wind and weather, and tread the frail bridges the snow-storm had cast over many a deep abyss.

Rudy spoke with much spirit, and his eyes sparkled while he

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described the life of a hunter, the cunning of the chamois and the wonderful springs they took, the mighty *jöhn*, and the rolling avalanche. He observed that at every new description he won more and more upon the Miller, and that the latter was particularly interested in his account of the lämmergeier and the bold royal eagle.

Not far from Bex, in the Canton Valais, there was an eagle's nest, built most ingeniously under a projecting platform of rock, on the margin of the hill; there was a young one in it, which no one could take. An Englishman had a few days before offered Rudy a large handful of gold if he would bring him the young eagle alive.

"But there are limits even to the most reckless daring," said Rudy. "The young eagle up there is not to be got at; it would be madness to make the attempt."

And the wine circulated fast, and the conversation flowed on fast, and Rudy thought the evening was much too short, although it was past midnight when he left the Miller's house after this his first visit.

The lights shone for a short time through the windows and were reflected on the green branches of the trees, while through the skylight on the roof, which was open, crept out the Parlor Cat, and met in the water-conduit on the roof the Kitchen Cat.

"Don't you see that there is something new going on here?" said the Parlor Cat. "There is secret love-making in the house. The father knows nothing of it yet. Rudy and Babette have been all the evening treading on each other's toes under the table; they trod on me twice, but I did not mew, for that would have aroused suspicion."

"Well, *I* would have done it," said the Kitchen Cat.

"What might suit the kitchen would not do in the parlor," replied the Parlor Cat. "I should like very much to know what the Miller will say when he hears of this engagement."

Yes, indeed—what would the Miller say? *That* Rudy also was anxious to know. He could not bring himself to wait long. Therefore, before many days had passed, when the omnibus

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rolled over the bridge between the Cantons Valais and Vaud, Rudy sat in it, with plenty of confidence as usual, and pleasant thoughts of the favorable answer he expected that evening.

And when the evening had come, and the omnibus was returning, Rudy also sat in it, going homeward. But at the Miller's the Parlor Cat jumped out again.

"Look here, you from the kitchen; the Miller knows everything now. There was a strange end to the affair. Rudy came here toward the afternoon, and he and Babette had a great deal to whisper about; they stood on the path a little below the Miller's room. I lay at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me.

"I will go straight to your father," said Rudy; "my proposal is honest and honorable."

""Shall I go with you," said Babette, "that I may give you courage?"

""I have plenty of courage," replied Rudy, "but if you are with me he must put some control upon himself, whether he likes the matter or not."

"So they went in. Rudy trod heavily on my tail—he is very clumsy. I mewed, but neither he nor Babette had ears for me. They opened the door and entered together, and I with them, but I sprang up to the back of a chair. I could scarcely hear what Rudy said, but I heard how the master blazed forth: it was a regular turning him out of doors up to the mountains and the chamois. Rudy might look after these, but not after our little Babette."

"But what did they say?" asked the Kitchen Cat.

"Say! They said all that is generally said under such circumstances when people go a-wooing. 'I love her and she loves me; and when there is milk in the can for one there is milk in the can for two.'

""But she is far above you," said the Miller; "she has lots of gold, and you have none. Don't you see that you cannot aspire to her?"

""There is nothing or no one so high that one may not reach if one is only determined to do so," said Rudy, getting angry.

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“But you said not long since that you could not reach the young eagle in its nest. Babette is a still higher and more difficult prize for you to take.”

“I will take them both,” replied Rudy.

“Very well! I will give her to you when you bring me the young eagle alive,” said the Miller, and he laughed until the tears stood in his eyes. ‘But now, thank you for your visit, Rudy! If you come again to-morrow you will find no one at home. Farewell, Rudy!”

“And Babette also said farewell in as timid and pitiable a voice as that of a little kitten which cannot see its mother.

“A promise is a promise, and a man is a man!” said Rudy. ‘Do not weep, Babette; I shall bring the young eagle.’

“You will break your neck, I hope!” exclaimed the Miller; ‘then we shall be free of this bad job.’ I call that sending him off with a flea in his ear! Now Rudy is gone, and Babette sits and cries, but the Miller sings German songs which he learned in his journey. I shall not distress myself about the matter; it would do no good.”

“But it is all very curious,” said the Kitchen Cat.

THE EAGLE'S NEST

FROM the mountain path came the sound of a person whistling in a strain so lively that it betokened good humor and undaunted courage. The whistler was Rudy; he was going to his friend Vesinand.

“You must help me! We shall take Ragli with us. I must carry off the young eagle up yonder under the shelving rock!”

“Had you not better try first to take down the moon? That would be about as hopeful an undertaking,” said Vesinand. “You are in great spirits, I see.”

“Yes, for I am thinking of my wedding. But now, to speak seriously, you shall know how matters stand with me.”

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And Vesinand and Ragli were soon made acquainted with what Rudy wished.

"You are a daring fellow," they said, "but you won't succeed—you will break your neck."

"One does not fall if one has no fear!" said Rudy.

About midnight they set out with alpenstocks, ladders, and ropes. The road lay through copsewood and brushwood, over rolling stones—upward, always upward, upward in the dark and gloomy night. The waters roared below, the waters murmured above, humid clouds swept heavily along. The hunters reached at length the precipitous ridge of rock. It became even darker here, for the walls of rock almost met, and light penetrated only a little way down from the open space above. Close by, under them, was a deep abyss, with its hoarse-sounding, raging water.

They sat all three quite still. They had to await the dawn of day, when the parent eagle should fly out; then only could they fire if they had any hope to capture the young one. Rudy sat as still as if he had been a portion of the rock on which he sat. He held his gun ready to fire; his eyes were steadily fixed on the highest part of the cleft, under a projecting rock of which the eagle's nest was concealed. The three hunters had long to wait.

At length high above them was heard a crashing, whirring noise; the air was darkened by a large object soaring in it. Two guns were ready to aim at the enormous eagle the moment it flew from its nest. A shot was fired; for an instant the outspread wings fluttered, and then the bird began to sink slowly, and it seemed as if with its size and the stretch of its wings it would fill the whole chasm, and in its fall drag the hunters down with it. The eagle disappeared in the abyss below; the cracking of the trees and bushes was heard, which were snapped and crushed in the fall of the stupendous bird.

And now commenced the business that had brought the hunters there. Three of the longest ladders were tied securely together. They were intended to reach the outermost and last stepping-place on the margin of the abyss; but they did not reach so high

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up, and smooth as a well-built wall was the perpendicular rocky ascent a good way higher up, where the nest was hidden under the shelter of the uppermost projecting portion of rock. After some consultation the younger men came to the conclusion that there was nothing better to be done than to hoist far up two more ladders tied together, and then to attach these to the three which had already been raised. With immense difficulty they pushed the two ladders up, and the ropes were made fast; the ladders shot out from over the rock and hung there swaying in the air above the unfathomable depth beneath. Rudy had placed himself already on the lowest step. It was an ice-cold morning; the mist was rising heavily from the dark chasm below. Rudy sat as a fly sits upon some swinging straw which a bird, building its nest, might have dropped on the edge of the lofty eyrie it had chosen for its site; but the insect could fly if the straw gave way—Rudy could but break his neck. The wind was howling around him, and away in the abyss below roared the gushing water from the melting glacier—the Ice-maiden's palace.

His ascent set the ladder into a tremulous motion as the spider does which holds fast to its long, waving, slender thread. When Rudy had gained the top of the fourth ladder he felt more confidence in them; he knew that they had been bound together by sure and skilful hands, though they dangled as if they had but slight fastenings.

But there was even more dangerous work before Rudy than mounting a line of ladders that now swayed like a frame of rushes in the air and now knocked against the perpendicular rock; he had to climb as a cat climbs. But Rudy could do that, thanks to the cat who had taught him. He did not perceive the presence of Vertigo, who trod the air behind him and stretched forth her polypus-arms after him. He gained at length the last step of the highest ladder, and then he observed that he had not got high enough even to see into the nest. It was only by using his hands that he could raise himself up to it; he tried if the lowest part of the thick interlaced underwood which formed the base of the nest was sufficiently strong, and when he had assured himself

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that the stunted trees were firm, he swung himself up by them from the ladder until his head and breast had reached the level of the nest. But then poured forth on him a stifling stench of carrion; for putrefied lambs, chamois, and birds lay there crowded together.

Swimming-in-the-Head, a sister to Vertigo, though it could not overpower him, puffed the disgusting, almost poisonous odor into his face, that he might become faint; and down below, in the black yawning ravine, upon the dank, dashing waters, sat the Ice-maiden herself, with her long pale-green hair, and gazed upward with her death-giving eyes, while she exclaimed:

“Now I will seize you!”

In a corner of the eagle's nest Rudy beheld the eaglet sitting—a large and powerful creature, even though it could not yet fly. Rudy fixed his eyes on it, held on marvelously with one hand, and with the other hand cast a noose around the young eagle; it was captured alive, its legs were in the tightened cord, and Rudy flung the sling with the bird over his shoulder, so that the creature hung a good way down beneath him, as, with the help of a rope, he held on until his foot touched at last the highest step of the ladder.

“Hold fast; don't fear to fall, and you will not do so!” Such was his early lesson, and Rudy acted on it; he held fast, crept down, and did not fall.

Then arose a shout of joy and congratulation. Rudy stood safely on the rocky ground, laden with his prize, the young eagle.

WHAT MORE THE PARLOR CAT HAD TO TELL

“HERE is what you demanded!” said Rudy, as he entered the Miller's house at Bex and placed on the floor a large basket. When he took its cover off there glared forth two yellow eyes surrounded with a dark ring—eyes so flashing, so wild, that they looked as though they would burn or blast everything they saw; the short, hard beak opened to bite; the neck was red and downy.



HELD ON TILL HIS FOOT TOUCHED THE LADDER

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“The young eagle!” exclaimed the Miller.

Babette screamed and sprang to one side, but could not take her eyes off from Rudy and the eaglet.

“You are not to be frightened!” said the Miller, addressing Rudy.

“And you will keep your word,” said Rudy; “every one has his object.”

“But how is it that you did not break your neck?” asked the Miller.

“Because I held fast,” replied Rudy; “and so I do now—I hold fast to Babette.”

“Wait till you get her!” said the Miller, laughing; and Babette thought that was a good sign.

“Let us take the young eagle out of the basket; it is frightful to see how its eyes glare. How did you manage to capture it?”

Rudy had to describe his feat, and as he spoke the Miller’s eyes opened wider and wider.

“With your confidence and your good fortune you might maintain three wives,” said the Miller.

“Oh, thank you!” cried Rudy.

“But you won’t get Babette just yet,” said the Miller, slapping the young Alpine hunter with good-humor on his shoulder.

“Do you know there is something going on again here?” said the Parlor Cat to the Kitchen Cat. “Rudy has brought us the young eagle, and takes Babette as his reward. They have kissed each other in the father’s presence! That was as good as a betrothal. The old man did not storm at all; he pulled in his claws, took an afternoon nap, and left the two to sit and chatter to each other. They have so much to say that they will not be tired talking till Christmas.”

And they were not tired talking till Christmas. The wind whirled in eddies through the groves and shook down the yellow leaves; the snow-drifts appeared in the valleys as well as on the lofty hills; the Ice-maiden sat in her proud palace, which she occupied during the winter-time; the upright walls of rocks were

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covered with sleet; enormous masses of ice tapestry were to be seen where in summer the mountain streams came pouring down; fantastic garlands of crystal ice hung over the snow-powdered pine-trees. The Ice-maiden rode on the howling wind, over the deepest dales. The carpet of snow was laid down as far as Bex; she could go there and see Rudy in the house where he now passed so much of his time with Babette. The wedding was to take place in summer, and they heard enough of it—their friends talked so much about it.

There came sunshine; the most beautiful Alpine roses bloomed. The lovely, laughing Babette was as charming as the early spring—the spring which makes all the birds sing of summer-time, when was to be the wedding-day.

"How these two do sit and hang over each other!" exclaimed the Parlor Cat. "I am sick of all this stuff."

THE ICE-MAIDEN'S SCORN OF MANKIND

SPRING had unfolded her fresh green garlands of walnut and chestnut trees, which were bursting into bloom, particularly in the country that extends from the bridge at St. Maurice to the Lake of Geneva and the banks of the Rhone, which with wild speed rushes from its source under the green glaciers—the ice palace where the Ice-maiden dwells—whence on the keen wind she permits herself to be borne up to the highest fields of snow and in the warm sunshine reclines on their drifting masses. Here she sat and gazed fixedly down into the deep valley beneath, where human beings, like ants on a sunlit stone, were to be seen busily moving about.

"Beings of mental power, as the children of the sun call you," cried the Ice-maiden, "ye are but vermin! Let a snowball but roll down, and you and your houses and your villages are crushed and overwhelmed." And she raised her proud head higher, and looked with death-threatening eyes around her and below her. But from the valley arose a strange sound; it was the blasting



HERE SHE SAT AND GAZED FIXEDLY DOWN

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of rocks—the work of men—the forming of roads and tunnels before the railway was laid down.

“They are working underground like moles; they are digging passages in the rock, and therefore are heard these sounds like the reports of guns. I shall remove my palaces, for the noise is greater than the roar of thunder itself.”

There ascended from the valley a thick smoke, which seemed agitated like a fluttering veil; it came curling up from the locomotive which upon the newly opened railway drew the train that, carriage linked to carriage, looked like a winding serpent. With an arrow’s speed it shot past.

“They pretend to be the masters down yonder, these powers of mind!” exclaimed the Ice-maiden; “but the mighty powers of nature are still the rulers.”

And she laughed, she sang; her voice resounded through the valley.

“An avalanche is falling!” cried the people down there.

Then the children of the sun sang in louder strains about the power of thought in mankind. It commands all, it brings the wide ocean under the yoke, levels mountains, fills up valleys; the power of thought in mankind makes them lords over the powers of nature.

Just at that moment there came, crossing the snow-fields where the Ice-maiden sat, a party of travelers; they had bound themselves fast to one another, to be as one large body upon the slippery ice near the deep abyss.

“Vermin!” she exclaimed. “*You* the lords of the powers of nature!” and she turned away from them and looked scornfully toward the deep valley where the railway-train was rushing by.

“There they go, these thoughts! They are full of might; I see them everywhere. One stands alone like a king, others stand in a group, and yonder half of them are asleep. And when the steam-engine stops still they get out and go their way. The thoughts then go forth into the world.” And she laughed.

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"There goes another avalanche!" said the inhabitants of the valley.

"It will not reach us," cried two who sat together in the train—"two souls, but one mind," as has been said. These were Rudy and Babette; the Miller accompanied them.

"Like baggage," he said, "I am with them as a sort of necessary appendage."

"There sit the two," said the Ice-maiden. "Many a chamois have I crushed, millions of Alpine roses have I snapped and broken, not a root left—I destroyed them all! Thought—power of mind, indeed!"

And she laughed again.

"There goes another avalanche!" said those down in the valley.

THE GODMOTHER

AT Montreux, one of the nearest towns, which, with Clarens, Bernex, and Crin, encircle the northeast part of the Lake of Geneva, resided Babette's godmother, the distinguished English lady, with her daughters and a young relation. They had only lately arrived, yet the Miller had already paid them a visit, announced Babette's engagement, and told about Rudy and the young eagle, the visit to Interlaken—in short, the whole story—and it had highly interested his hearers, and pleased them with Rudy, Babette, and even the Miller himself. They were invited, all three, to come to Montreux, and they went. Babette ought to see her godmother, and her godmother wished to see her.

At the little town of Villeneuve, about the end of the Lake of Geneva, lay the steamboat that in a voyage of half an hour went thence to Bernex, a little way below Montreux. It is a coast which has often been celebrated in song by poets. There, under the walnut-trees, on the banks of the deep, bluish-green lake, Byron sat and wrote his melodious verses about the prisoner in the gloomy mountain castle of Chillon. There, where Clarens is reflected amid weeping willows in the clear water, wandered

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Rousseau, dreaming of Héloïse. The river Rhone glides away under the lofty snow-clad hills of Savoy; here there lies, not far from its mouth, a small island, so small that from the shore it looks as if it were but a toy islet. It is a patch of rocky ground which about a century ago a lady caused to be walled round and covered with earth, in which three acacia-trees were planted; these now overshadowed the whole island. Babette had always been charmed with this little islet; she thought it the loveliest spot that was to be seen on the whole voyage. She said she would like so much to land there—she must land there—it would be so delightful under these beautiful trees. But the steamer passed it by and did not stop until it had reached Bernex.

The little party proceeded thence up amid the white sunlit walls that surrounded the vineyards in front of the little town of Montreux, where the peasants' houses are shaded by fig-trees, and laurels and cypresses grow in the gardens. Half-way up the ascent stood the boarding-house where the godmother lived.

The meeting was very cordial. The godmother was a stout, pleasant-looking woman with a round, smiling face. When a child she must certainly have exhibited quite a Raphael-like cherub's head; it was still an angel's head, but older and with silver-white hair clustering round it. The daughters were well dressed, elegant-looking, tall and slender. The young cousin who was with them, and who was dressed in white almost from top to toe, and had red hair and red whiskers large enough to have been divided among three gentlemen, began immediately to pay the utmost attention to little Babette.

Splendidly bound books and drawings were lying on the large table; music-books were also to be seen in the room. The balcony looked out upon the beautiful lake, which was so bright and calm that the mountains of Savoy, with their villages, woods, and snow-peaks, were clearly reflected in it.

Rudy, who was generally so lively and so undaunted, found himself not at all at his ease. He was obliged to be as much on his guard as if he were walking on peas over a slippery floor. How tediously time passed! It was like being in a

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treadmill. And now they were to go out to walk! This was quite as tiresome. Two steps forward and one backward Rudy had to take to keep pace with the others. Down to Chillon, the gloomy old castle on the rocky island, they went, to look at instruments of torture and dungeons, rusty fetters attached to the rocky walls, stone pallets for those condemned to death, trap-doors through which the unfortunate creatures were hurled down to fall upon iron spikes amid burning piles. They called it a pleasure to look at all these! A dreadful place of execution it was, elevated by Byron's verse into the world of poetry. Rudy viewed it only as a place of execution. He leaned against the wide stone embrasure of the window and gazed down on the deep blue-green of the water, and over to the little solitary island with the three acacias. How much he wished himself there—free from the whole babbling party!

But Babette felt quite happy. She had been excessively amused, she said afterward; the cousin had "found her perfect."

"Oh yes—mere idle talk!" replied Rudy; and this was the first time he had ever said anything that did not please her.

The Englishman had made her a present of a little book as a souvenir of Chillon; it was Byron's poem, the "Prisoner of Chillon," translated into French, so that Babette was able to read it.

"The book may be good enough," said Rudy, "but the nicely combed fop who gave it to you is no favorite of mine."

"He looks like a meal-sack without meal," cried the Miller, laughing at his own wit.

Rudy laughed, too, and said it was an excellent remark.

THE COUSIN

WHEN Rudy, a few days afterward, went to pay a visit to the Miller he found the young Englishman there. Babette had just placed before him a plate of trout, and she had taken much pains to decorate the dish. Rudy thought that was unnecessary.

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What was the Englishman doing there? What did he want? Why was he thus served and pampered by Babette? Rudy was jealous, and that pleased Babette. It amused her to see all the feelings of his heart—the strong and the weak. Love was to her as yet but a pastime, and she played with Rudy's whole heart; but nevertheless it is certain that he was the center of all her thoughts—the dearest, the most valued in this world. Still, the more gloomy he looked the merrier her eyes laughed. She could almost have kissed the fair Englishman with the red whiskers if she could by doing this have seen Rudy rush out in a rage; it would have shown her how greatly she was beloved by him.

This was not right, not wise in little Babette; but she was only nineteen years of age. She did not reflect on her unkindness to Rudy; still less did she think how her conduct might appear to the young Englishman, or if it were not lighter and more wanting in propriety than became the Miller's modest, lately betrothed daughter.

Where the highway from Bex passes under the snow-clad rocky heights which, in the language of the country, are called *Diablerets*, stood the mill, not far from a rapid, rushing mountain stream of a grayish-white color and looking as if covered with soap-suds. It was not that which turned the mill, but a smaller stream which on the other side of the river came tumbling down the rocks and, through a circular reservoir surrounded by stones in the road beneath, with its violence and speed forced itself up and ran into an inclosed basin, a wide dam which, above the rushing river, turned the large wheel of the mill. When the dam was full of water it overflowed and caused the path to be so damp and slippery that it was difficult to walk on it, and there was the chance of a fall into the water and being carried by it more swiftly than pleasantly toward the mill. Such a mishap had nearly befallen the young Englishman. Equipped in white like a miller's man, he was climbing the path in the evening, guided by the light that shone from Babette's chamber window. He had never learned to climb and had almost gone head foremost into the water, but escaped with wet arms and bespattered clothes.

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Covered with mud and dirty-looking, he arrived beneath Babette's window, clambered up the old linden-tree, and there began to mimic the owl—no other bird could he attempt to imitate. Babette heard the sounds and peeped through the thin curtains; but when she saw the man in white and felt certain who he was her little heart beat with terror and also with anger. She quickly extinguished her light, felt if the window were securely fastened, and then left him to screech at his leisure.

How terrible it would be if Rudy were now at the mill! But Rudy was not at the mill; no, it was much worse—he was close by outside. High words were spoken—angry words; there might be blows, there might even be murder!

Babette hastened to open her window and, calling Rudy's name, bade him go away, adding that she could not permit him to remain there.

"You will not permit me to remain here!" he exclaimed. "Then this is an appointment! You are expecting some good friend—some one whom you prefer to me! Shame on you, Babette!"

"You are unbearable!" cried Babette. "I hate you!" And she burst into tears. "Go—go!"

"I have not deserved this," said Rudy as he went away, his cheeks like fire, his heart like fire.

Babette threw herself, weeping, on her bed.

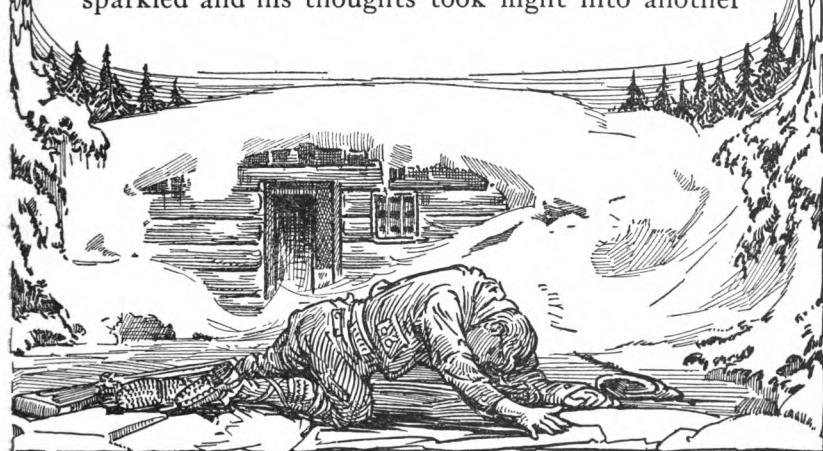
"And you can think ill of me, Rudy—of me who loves you so dearly!"

She was angry—very angry—and that was good for her; she would otherwise have been deeply afflicted. As it was, she could fall asleep and slumber as only youth can.



EVIL POWERS

RUDY left Bex and took his way homeward, choosing the path up the mountains with its cold, fresh air, where amid the deep snow the Ice-maiden holds her sway. The largest trees with their thick foliage looked, so far below, as if they were but potato-tops; the pines and the bushes became smaller; the Alpine roses were covered with snow, which lay in single patches like linen on a bleach-field. One solitary blue gentian stood in his path; he crushed it with the butt-end of his gun. Higher up two chamois showed themselves. Rudy's eyes sparkled and his thoughts took flight into another



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channel, but he was not near enough for a sure aim. Higher still he ascended, where only a few blades of grass grew amid the blocks of ice. The chamois passed in peace over the fields of snow. Rudy pressed angrily on; thick mists gathered around him, and presently he found himself on the brink of the steep precipice of rock. The rain began to fall in torrents. He felt a burning thirst; his head was hot, his limbs were cold. He sought for his hunting-flask, but it was empty: he had not given it a thought when he rushed up the mountains. He had never been ill in his life, but now he experienced a sensation like illness. He was very tired and felt a strong desire to throw himself down and sleep, but water was streaming all around him. He tried to arouse himself, but every object seemed to be dancing in a strange manner before his eyes.

Suddenly he beheld what he had never before seen there—a newly built low hut that leaned against the rock—and in the doorway stood a young girl. He thought she was the school-master's daughter, Annette, whom he had once kissed in the dance, but she was not Annette; yet certainly he had seen her before, perhaps near Grindelwald the evening he was returning home from the shooting-matches at Interlaken.

“How did you come here?” he asked.

“I am at home,” she replied; “I am watching my flocks.”

“Your flocks! Where do they find grass? Here there is nothing but snow and rocks.”

“You know much about it, to be sure!” she said, laughing. “Behind this, a little way down, is a very nice piece of pasture-land. My goats go there. I take good care of them; I never miss one; I keep what belongs to me.”

“You are stout-hearted,” said Rudy.

“And so are you,” she answered.

“If you have any milk, pray give me some; my thirst is almost intolerable.”

“I have something better than milk,” she replied; “you shall have that. To-day some travelers came here with their guides; they left half a flask of wine behind them. They

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will not return for it, and I shall not drink it, so you shall have it."

She went for the wine, poured it into a wooden goblet, and gave it to Rudy.

"It is excellent," said he; "I never tasted any wine so warming, so reviving." And his eyes beamed with a wondrous brilliancy; there came a thrill of enjoyment, a glow over him, as if every sorrow and every vexation were vanishing from his mind; the free gushing feeling of man's nature awoke in him.

"But you are surely Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter," he exclaimed. "Give me a kiss."

"First give me the pretty ring you wear on your finger."

"My betrothal ring?"

"Yes, just it," said the girl; and, replenishing the goblet with wine, she held it to his lips, and again he drank. A strange sense of pleasure seemed to rush into his very blood. The whole world was his, he seemed to fancy. Why torment himself? Everything is given for our gratification and enjoyment. The stream of life is the stream of happiness; flow on with it, let yourself be borne away on it—that is felicity. He gazed on the young girl. She was Annette, and yet *not* Annette; still less was she the magical phantom, as he had called *her* whom he had met near Grindelwald. The girl up here upon the mountain was fresh as the new-fallen snow, blooming like an Alpine rose, and lively as a kid; yet still formed from Adam's rib, a human being like Rudy himself. And he flung his arms around her and gazed into her marvelously clear eyes. It was only for a moment; and in that moment—how shall it be expressed, how described in words? Was it the life of the spirit or the life of death which took possession of him? Was he raised higher, or was he sinking down into the deep icy abyss, deeper, always deeper? He beheld the walls of ice shining like blue-green glass; endless crevasses yawned around him, and the waters dripped with a sound like the chime of bells—they were clear as a pearl lighted by pale-blue flames. The Ice-maiden kissed him; it chilled him through his whole body. He uttered a cry of horror, broke resolutely away

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from her, stumbled and fell; all became dark to his eyes, but he opened them again. The evil powers had played their game.

The Alpine girl was gone, the sheltering hut was gone; water poured down the naked rocks, and snow lay all around. Rudy was shivering with cold, soaked through to the very skin, and his ring was gone—the betrothal ring Babette had given him. His gun lay on the snow close by him; he took it up and tried to discharge it, but it missed fire. Damp clouds rested like thick masses of snow on the mountain clefts. Vertigo sat there and glared upon her powerless prey, and beneath her rang through the deep crevasse a sound as if a mass of rock had fallen down and was crushing and carrying away everything that opposed it in its furious descent.

At the Miller's Babette sat and wept. Six days had elapsed since Rudy had been there—he who was in the wrong, he who ought to ask her forgiveness, for she loved him with her whole heart.

AT THE MILLER'S HOUSE

"How frightfully foolish mankind are!" said the Parlor Cat to the Kitchen Cat. "It is all broken off now between Babette and Rudy. She sits and cries, and he thinks no more about her."

"I don't like that," said the Kitchen Cat.

"Nor I, either," replied the Parlor Cat; "but I am not going to distress myself about it. Babette can take the red whiskers for her sweetheart. He has not been here since the evening he wanted to go on the roof."

The powers of evil carry on their game without and within us. Rudy was aware of this, and he reflected on it. What had passed around him and within him up yonder on the mountain? Was it sin or was it a fever dream? He had never known fever or illness before. While he blamed Babette he took a retrospective glance within himself. He thought of the wild tornado in his heart, the hot whirlwind which had recently broken loose there. Could he confess all to Babette—every thought

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which in the hour of temptation might have been carried out? He had lost her ring, and in this very loss she had won him back. Was any confession due from her to him? He felt as if his heart were breaking when his thoughts reverted to her—so many recollections crowded on his mind. He saw in her a laughing, merry child, full of life; many an affectionate word she had addressed to him, in the fullness of her heart, came like a ray of the sun to gladden his soul, and soon it was all sunshine there for Babette.

She must, however, apologize to him, and she should do so.

He went to the Miller's, and confession followed; it began with a kiss, and ended in Rudy's being the sinner. His great fault was that he could have doubted Babette's constancy—that was too bad of him! Such distrust, such impetuosity, might cause misery to them both. Yes, very true! and therefore Babette preached him a little sermon, which pleased herself vastly and during which she looked very pretty. But in one particular Rudy was right—the godmother's nephew was a mere babbler. She would burn the book he had given her and not keep the slightest article that would remind her of him.

“Well, it is all right again,” said the Parlor Cat. “Rudy has come back, they have made friends; and that is the greatest of pleasures, they say.”

“I heard during the night,” said the Kitchen Cat, “the rats declaring that the greatest of pleasures was to eat candle-grease and to banquet on tainted meat. Which of them is to be believed, the lovers or the rats?”

“Neither of them,” replied the Parlor Cat. “It is always safest to believe no one.”

The greatest happiness for Rudy and Babette was about to take place; the auspicious day, as it is called, was approaching—their wedding-day!

But not in the church at Bex, not at the Miller's house, was the wedding to be solemnized; the godmother had requested that the marriage should be celebrated at her abode, and that the ceremony should be performed in the pretty little church at Montreux. The Miller was very urgent that this arrange-

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ment should be agreed to; he alone knew what the godmother intended to bestow on the young couple—they were to receive from her a wedding gift that was well worth such a small concession to her wishes. The day was fixed; they were to go to Villeneuve the evening before in order to proceed by an early steamer next morning to Montreux, that the godmother's daughters might adorn the bride.

“There ought to be a second day's wedding here in this house,” said the Parlor Cat, “else I am sure I would not give a mew for the whole affair.”

“There is going to be a grand feast,” replied the Kitchen Cat. “Ducks and pigeons have been killed, and an entire deer hangs against the wall. My mouth waters when I look at all this. To-morrow they commence their journey.”

Yes, to-morrow! That evening Rudy and Babette sat as a betrothed couple for the last time at the Miller's house. Outside was to be seen the Alpine glow; the evening bells were ringing; the daughters of the sun sang, “That which is best will be!”

NIGHT VISIONS

THE sun had set; the clouds lay low in the valley of the Rhone; amid the lofty mountains the wind blew from the south—an African wind. Suddenly over the high Alps there arose a *fōnh* which swept the clouds asunder; and when the wind had lulled all became for a moment perfectly still. The scattered clouds hung in fantastic forms amid the wooded hills that skirted the rapid Rhone; they hung in forms like those of the marine animals of the antediluvian world, like eagles hovering in the air, and like frogs springing in a marsh; they sank down over the gushing river and seemed to sail upon it, yet it was in the air they sailed. The current carried with it an uprooted pine-tree; the water whirled in eddies around it. It was Vertigo and some of her sisters that were thus dancing in circles upon the foaming stream. The moon shone on the snow-capped hills, on the dark woods, on

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the curious white clouds—those appearances of the night that seem to be the spirits of nature. The mountain peasant saw them through his little window; they sailed outside in hosts before the Ice-maiden who came from her glacier palace. She sat on a frail skiff, the uprooted pine; the water from the glaciers bore her down to the river near the lake.

“The wedding guests are coming!” the air and the waters seemed to murmur and to sing.

Warnings without, warnings within! Babette had an extraordinary dream.

It seemed to her as if she were married to Rudy, and had been so for many years; that he was out chamois-hunting, but she was at home; and that the young Englishman with the red whiskers was sitting with her. His eyes were full of passion, his words had, as it were, a magic power in them; he held out his hand to her, and she felt compelled to go with him; they went forth from her home, and went always downward. And Babette felt as if there were a weight in her heart which was becoming every moment heavier. She was committing a sin against Rudy—a sin against God. And suddenly she found herself forsaken; her dress was torn to pieces by thorns, her hair was gray. She looked upward in deep distress, and on the margin of a mountain ridge she beheld Rudy. She stretched her arms up toward him, but did not dare either to call to him or to pray; and neither would have been of any avail, for she soon perceived that it was not himself, but only his shooting jacket and cap which were hanging on an alpenstock, as hunters sometimes place them to deceive the chamois. And in great misery Babette exclaimed:

“Oh, that I had died on my wedding-day—the day that was the happiest of my life! O Lord my God! that would have been a mercy—a blessing! That would have been the best thing that could have happened for me and Rudy. No one knows his future fate.” And in impious despair she cast herself down into the deep mountain chasm. A string seemed to have broken—a tone of sorrow was echoed around.

Babette awoke. Her vision was at an end, and what had

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happened in the dream-world had partially vanished from her mind; but she knew that she had dreamed something frightful, and dreamed about the young Englishman, whom she had not seen or thought of for several months. Could he still be at Montreux? Would she see him at her wedding? A slight shade of displeasure stole around Babette's pretty mouth and for a moment her eyebrows knitted; but soon came a smile and a gay sparkle in her eye. The sun was shining so brightly without, and to-morrow was her and Rudy's wedding-day!

He was already in the parlor when she came down, and shortly after they set off for Villeneuve. The two were all happiness, and the Miller likewise; he laughed and joked and was in the highest spirits. A kind father, a good soul, he was.

"Now we have the house to ourselves," said the Parlor Cat.

THE CONCLUSION

IT was not yet late in the day when the three joyous travelers reached Villeneuve. After they had dined the Miller placed himself in a comfortable arm-chair with his pipe, intending, when he had done smoking, to take a short nap. The affianced couple went arm in arm out of the town, along the highroad, under the wooded hills that bordered the blue-green lake. The gray walls and heavy towers of the melancholy-looking Chillon were reflected in the clear water. The little island with the three acacias seemed quite near; it looked like a bouquet on the calm lake.

"How charming it must be over yonder!" exclaimed Babette, who felt again the greatest desire to go to it; and her wish might be gratified at once, for a boat was lying close to the bank and the rope by which it was secured was easy to undo. There was no one to be seen of whom they could ask permission to take it, so they got into it without leave. Rudy knew very well how to row. The oars, like the fins of a fish, divided the mass of water that is so pliant and yet so potent, so strong to bear, so ready to

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swallow—gentle, smiling, smoothness itself, and yet terror-inspiring and mighty to destroy. A line of foam floated behind the boat, which in a few minutes arrived at the little island, where the happy pair immediately landed. There was just room for two to dance.

Rudy swung Babette three or four times around, and then they sat down on the little bench under the drooping acacia, and looked into each other's eyes and held each other's hands, while around them streamed the last rays of the setting sun. The pine forests on the hills assumed a purplish-red tint, resembling the hue of the blooming heather; and where the trees stopped and the bare rocks stood forward there was a rich luster, as if the mountain were transparent. The skies were brilliant with a crimson glow; the whole lake was covered with a tinge of pink, as if it had been thickly strewn with fresh, blushing roses. As the shades of evening gathered around the snow-decked mountains of Savoy they became of a dark blue in color, but the highest peaks shone like red lava and for a moment reflected their light on the mountain forms before these vast masses were lost in darkness. It was the Alpine glow, and Rudy and Babette thought they had never before beheld one so magnificent. The snow-bedecked Dent du Midi gleamed like the disk of the full moon when it shows itself above the horizon.

“Oh, what beauty! Oh, what pleasure!” exclaimed the lovers at the same time.

“Earth can bestow no more on me,” said Rudy; “an evening like this is as a whole life. How often have I been sensible of my good fortune, as I am sensible of it now, and have thought that if everything were to come at once to an end for me I have lived a happy life! What a blessed world is this! One day ends, but another begins, and I always fancy the last is the brightest. Our Lord is infinitely good, Babette.”

“I am so happy,” she whispered.

“Earth can bestow no more on me,” repeated Rudy. And the evening bells rang from the hills of Savoy and the mountains of Switzerland. In golden splendor stood forth toward the west the dark-blue Jura.

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"God grant you all that is brightest and best!" exclaimed Babette, fervently.

"He will," said Rudy. "To-morrow will fulfil that wish. To-morrow you will be wholly mine—my own little charming wife."

"The boat!" cried Babette at that moment.

The boat which was to take them across again had got loose and was drifting away from the island.

"I will bring it back," said Rudy, as he took off his coat and boots and, springing into the lake, swam vigorously toward the boat.

Cold and deep was the clear, bluish-green, icy water from the glacier of the mountain. Rudy looked down into it—he took but a glance, yet he saw a gold ring trembling, glittering, and playing there. He thought of his lost betrothal ring, and the ring became larger and extended itself out into a sparkling circle, within which appeared the clear glacier; endless deep chasms yawned around it, and the water dropped tinkling like the sound of bells, and gleaming with pale-blue flames. In a second he beheld what it will take many words to describe. Young hunters and young girls, men and women who had been lost in the crevasses of the glacier, stood there, life-like, with open eyes and smiling lips; and far beneath them arose from buried villages the church-bells' chimes. Multitudes knelt under the vaulted roofs; ice-blocks formed the organ-pipes, and the mountain torrents made the music. The Ice-maiden sat on the clear, transparent ground; she raised herself up toward Rudy and kissed his feet, and there passed throughout his limbs a death-like chill, an electric shock—ice and fire; it was impossible to distinguish one from the other in the quick touch.

"Mine! mine!" sounded around him and within him. "I kissed thee when thou wert little—kissed thee on thy mouth! Now I kiss thee on thy feet; now thou art wholly mine!"

And he disappeared in the clear blue water.

All was still around. The church-bells had ceased to ring; their last tones had died away along with the last streak of red on the skies above.



LOOKED INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES AND HELD EACH
OTHER'S HANDS

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“Thou art mine!” resounded in the depths below. “Thou art mine!” resounded from beyond the heights—from infinity!

Happy to pass from love to love, from earth to heaven!

A string seemed to have broken—a tone of sorrow was echoed around. The ice-kiss of death had triumphed over the corruptible, the prelude to the drama of life had ended before the game itself had begun. All that seemed harsh or sounded harshly had subsided into harmony.

Do you call this a sad story?

Poor Babette! For her it was an hour of anguish. The boat drifted farther and farther away. No one on the mainland knew that the betrothed couple had gone over to the little island. The evening advanced, the clouds gathered, darkness came. Alone, despairing, wailing, she stood there. A furious storm came on; the lightning played over the Jura Mountains, and over those of Switzerland and Savoy; from all sides flash followed upon flash, while the peals of thunder rolled in all directions for many minutes at a time. One moment the lightning was so vivid that all around became as bright as day—every single vine stem could be seen as distinctly as at the hour of noon—and in another moment the blackest darkness enveloped all. The lightning darted in zigzags around the lake, and the roar of the thunder was echoed among the surrounding hills. On land the boats were drawn far up the beach, and all that were living had sought shelter. And now the rain poured down in torrents.

“Where can Rudy and Babette be in this awful weather?” said the Miller.

Babette sat with folded hands, with her head in her lap, exhausted by grief, by screaming, by weeping.

“In the deep water,” she sobbed to herself, “far down yonder, as under a glacier, *he* lies.”

She remembered what Rudy had told her about his mother’s death, and of his being saved himself when taken up apparently dead from the cleft in the glacier. “The Ice-maiden has him again!”

And there came a flash of lightning as dazzling as the sun’s

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rays on the white snow. Babette looked up. The lake rose at that moment like a shining glacier; the Ice-maiden stood there, majestic, pale, glittering, and at her feet lay Rudy's corpse.

"Mine!" she cried, and again all around was gloom and darkness and torrents of rain.

"Terrible!" groaned Babette. "Why should he die just when our happy day was so close at hand? Great God, enlighten my understanding—shed light upon my heart! I comprehend not Thy ways, determined by Thine almighty power and wisdom."

And God *did* shed light on her heart. A retrospective glance—a sense of grace—her dream of the preceding night—all crowded together on her mind. She remembered the words she had spoken—a wish for that which might be best for herself and Rudy.

"Woe is me! Was it the germ of sin in my heart? Was my dream a glimpse into the future, whose course had to be thus violently arrested to save me from guilt? Unhappy wretch that I am!"

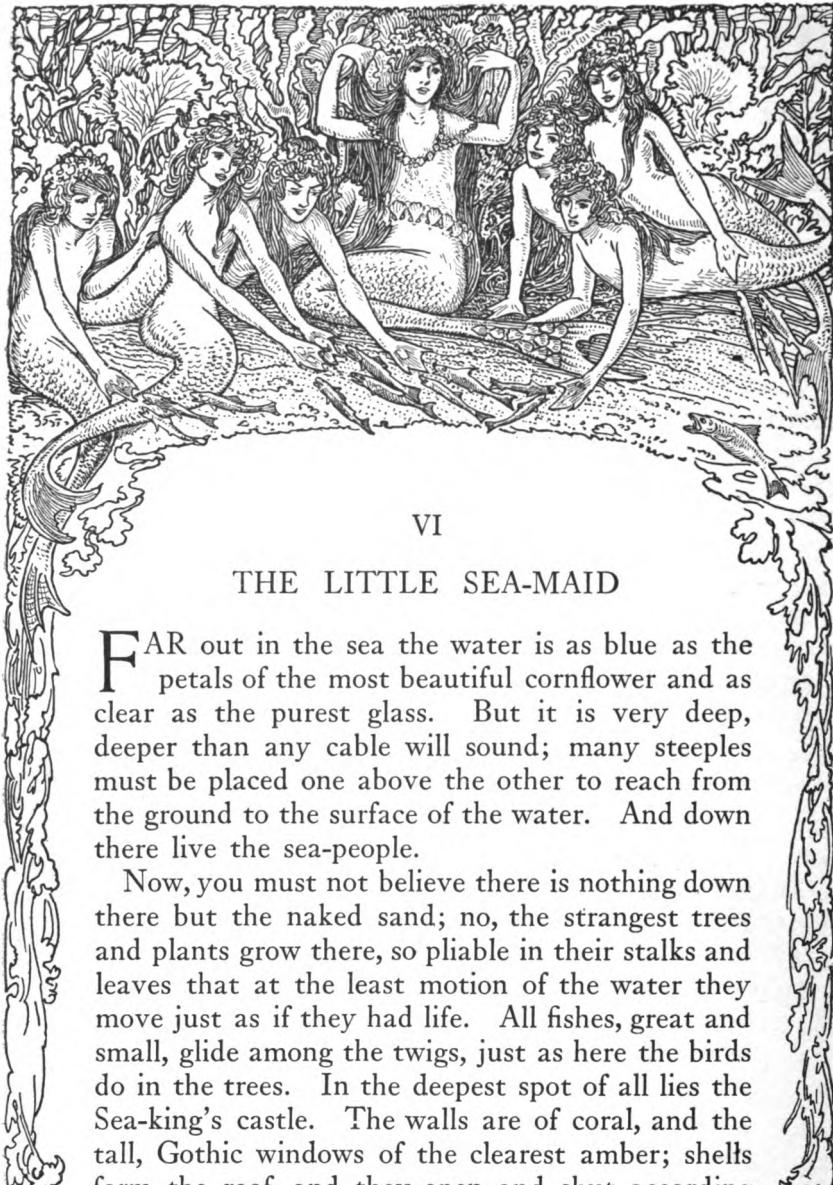
She sat wailing there in the pitch-dark night. During the deep stillness seemed to ring around her Rudy's words—the last he had ever spoken—"Earth can bestow no more on me!" Their sound was fraught with the fullness of joy; they were echoes amid the depths of grief.

Some few years have elapsed since then. The lake smiles, its shores smile; the vines bear luscious grapes; steamboats with waving flags glide swiftly by; pleasure boats with their two unfurled sails skim like white butterflies over the watery mirror; the railway beyond Chillon is open, and it goes far into the valley of the Rhone. At every station strangers issue from it—they come with their red-bound guide-books and study therein what they ought to see. They visit Chillon, observe in the lake the little island with the three acacias, and read in the book about a bridal pair who in the year 1856 rowed over to it one afternoon—of the bridegroom's death, and that not till the next morning were heard upon the shore the bride's despairing cries.

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But the guide-book gives no account of Babette's quiet life at her father's house—not at the mill (strangers now live there), but at a pretty spot whence from her window she can often look beyond the chestnut-trees to the snowy hills over which Rudy loved to range; she can see at the hour of evening the Alpine glow—up where the children of the sun revel, and repeat their song about the wanderer whose cap the whirlwind carried off, but it could not take himself.

There is a rosy tint upon the mountain's snow—there is a rosy tint in every heart which admits the thought, "God ordains what is best for us!" But it is not vouchsafed to us all so fully to feel this as it was to Babette in her dream.



VI

THE LITTLE SEA-MAID

FAR out in the sea the water is as blue as the petals of the most beautiful cornflower and as clear as the purest glass. But it is very deep, deeper than any cable will sound; many steeples must be placed one above the other to reach from the ground to the surface of the water. And down there live the sea-people.

Now, you must not believe there is nothing down there but the naked sand; no, the strangest trees and plants grow there, so pliable in their stalks and leaves that at the least motion of the water they move just as if they had life. All fishes, great and small, glide among the twigs, just as here the birds do in the trees. In the deepest spot of all lies the Sea-king's castle. The walls are of coral, and the tall, Gothic windows of the clearest amber; shells form the roof, and they open and shut according as the water flows. It looks lovely, for in each shell lie gleaming pearls, a single one of which would have great value in a queen's diadem.

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The Sea-king below there had been a widower for many years, while his old mother kept house for him. She was a clever woman, but proud of her rank, so she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other great people were only allowed to wear six. Beyond this she was deserving of great praise, especially because she was very fond of her granddaughters, the little Sea-princesses. These were six pretty children; but the youngest was the most beautiful of all. Her skin was as clear and as fine as a rose leaf; her eyes were as blue as the deepest sea; but, like all the rest, she had no feet, for her body ended in a fish-tail.

All day long they could play in the castle, down in the halls, where living flowers grew out of the walls. The great amber windows were opened, and then the fishes swam in to them, just as the swallows fly in to us when we open our windows; but the fishes swam straight up to the Princesses, ate out of their hands, and let themselves be stroked.

Outside the castle was a great garden with bright-red and dark-blue flowers; the fruit glowed like gold, and the flowers like flames of fire; and they continually kept moving their stalks and leaves. The earth itself was the finest sand, but blue as the flame of brimstone. A peculiar blue radiance lay upon everything down there; one would have thought oneself high in the air, with the canopy of heaven above and around, rather than at the bottom of the deep sea. During a calm the sun could be seen; it appeared like a purple flower from which all light streamed out.

Each of the little Princesses had her own little place in the garden where she might dig and plant at her good pleasure. One gave her flower-bed the form of a whale; another thought it better to make hers like a little sea-woman; but the youngest made hers quite round, like the sun, and had flowers which gleamed red as the sun itself. She was a strange child, quiet and thoughtful; and when the other sisters made a display of the beautiful things they had received out of wrecked ships, she would have nothing beyond the red flowers which resembled the sun, except a pretty marble statue. This was a figure of a

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charming boy, hewn out of white clear stone, which had sunk down to the bottom of the sea from a wreck. She planted a pink weeping-willow beside this statue; the tree grew famously, and hung its fresh branches over the statue toward the blue sandy ground where the shadow showed violet, and moved like the branches themselves; it seemed as if the ends of the branches and the roots were playing together and wished to kiss each other.

There was no greater pleasure for her than to hear of the world of men above them. The old grandmother had to tell all she knew of ships and towns, of men and animals. It seemed particularly beautiful to her that up on the earth the flowers shed fragrance, for they had none down at the bottom of the sea, and that the trees were green, and that the fishes which one saw there among the trees could sing so loud and clear that it was a pleasure to hear them. What the grandmother called fishes were the little birds; the Princess could not understand them in any other way, for she had never seen a bird.

"When you have reached your fifteenth year," said the grandmother, "you shall have leave to rise up out of the sea, to sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and to see the great ships as they sail by. Then you will see forests and towns!"

In the next year one of the sisters was fifteen years of age, but each of the others was one year younger than the next; so that the youngest had full five years to wait before she could come up from the bottom of the sea and find how our world looked. But one promised to tell the others what she had seen and what she had thought the most beautiful on the first day of her visit; for their grandmother could not tell them enough—there was so much about which they wanted information.

No one was more anxious about these things than the youngest—just that one who had the longest time to wait and who was always quiet and thoughtful. Many a night she stood by the open window and looked up through the dark-blue water at the fishes splashing with their fins and tails. Moon and stars she could see; they certainly shone quite faintly, but through the water they looked much larger than they appear in our eyes.

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When something like a black cloud passed among them she knew that it was either a whale swimming over her head or a ship with many people; they certainly did not think that a pretty little sea-maid was standing down below, stretching up her white hands toward the keel of their ship.

Now the eldest Princess was fifteen years old and might mount up to the surface of the sea.

When she came back she had a hundred things to tell—but the finest thing, she said, was to lie in the moonshine on a sand-bank in the quiet sea and to look at the neighboring coast with the large town, where the lights twinkled like a hundred stars, and to hear the music and the noise and clamor of carriages and men, to see the many church steeples, and to hear the sound of the bells. Just because she could not get up to these she longed for them more than for anything else.

Oh, how the youngest sister listened! And afterward when she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark-blue water she thought of the great city with all its bustle and noise; and then she thought she could hear the church-bells ringing, even down to the depth where she was.

In the following year the second sister received permission to mount upward through the water and to swim whither she pleased. She rose up just as the sun was setting; and this spectacle, she said, was the most beautiful. The whole sky looked like gold; and as to the clouds, she could not properly describe their beauty. They sailed away over her head, purple and violet-colored, but far more quickly than the clouds there flew a flock of wild swans, like a long white veil, over the water toward where the sun stood. She swam toward them; but the sun sank and the roseate hue faded on the sea and in the clouds.

In the following year the next sister went up. She was the boldest of them all, and therefore she swam up a broad stream that poured its waters into the sea. She saw glorious green hills clothed with vines; palaces and castles shone forth from amid splendid woods; she heard how all the birds sang; and the sun shone so warm that she was often obliged to dive under

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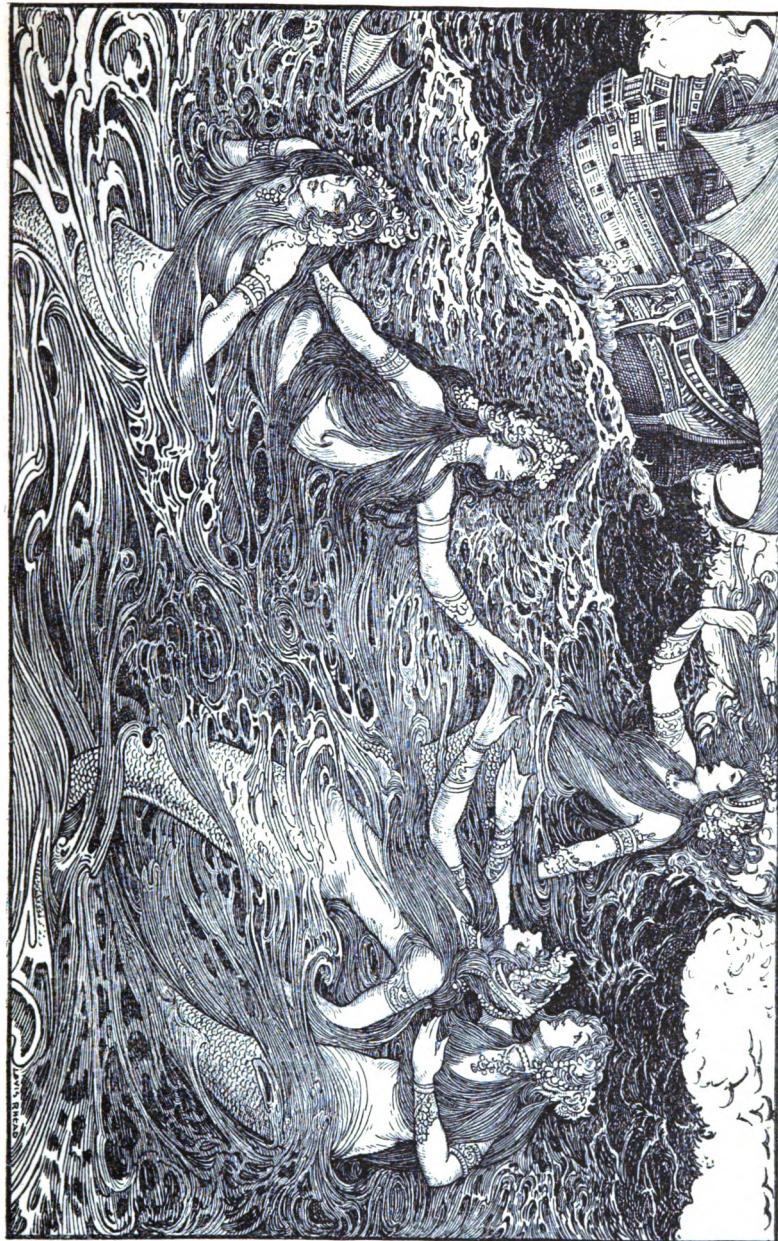
the water to cool her glowing face. In a little bay she found a whole swarm of little mortals. They were quite naked and splashed about in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they fled in affright, and a little black animal came—it was a dog, but she had never seen a dog—and it barked at her so terribly that she became frightened and tried to gain the open sea. But she could never forget the glorious woods, the green hills, and the pretty children who could swim in the water, though they had not fish-tails.

The fourth sister was not so bold; she remained out in the midst of the wild sea, and declared that just there it was most beautiful. One could see for many miles around, and the sky above looked like a bell of glass. She had seen ships, but only in the far distance—they looked like sea-gulls; and the funny dolphins had thrown somersaults, and the great whales spouted out water from their nostrils so that it looked like hundreds of fountains all around.

Now came the turn of the fifth sister. Her birthday came in the winter, and so she saw what the others had not seen the first time. The sea looked quite green and great icebergs were floating about; each one appeared like a pearl, she said, and yet was much taller than the church-steeple built by men. They showed themselves in the strangest forms, and shone like diamonds. She had seated herself upon one of the greatest of all, and let the wind play with her long hair; and all the sailing-ships tacked about in a very rapid way beyond where she sat; but toward evening the sky became covered with clouds, it thundered and lightened, and the black waves lifted the great ice-blocks high up and let them glow in the red glare. On all the ships the sails were reefed, and there were fear and anguish. But she sat quietly upon her floating iceberg and saw the forked blue flashes dart into the sea.

Each of the sisters, as she came up for the first time to the surface of the water, was delighted with the new and beautiful sights she saw; but as they now had permission, as grown-up girls, to go whenever they liked, it became indifferent to them.

THEY SWAM BEFORE THE SHIPS AND SANG LOVELY SONGS



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They wished themselves back again, and after a month had elapsed they said it was best of all down below, for there one felt so comfortably at home.

Many an evening hour the five sisters took one another by the arm and rose up in a row over the water. They had splendid voices, more charming than any mortal could have; and when a storm was approaching, so that they could apprehend that ships would go down, they swam on before the ships and sang lovely songs, which told how beautiful it was at the bottom of the sea, and exhorted the sailors not to be afraid to come down. But these could not understand the words, and thought it was the storm sighing; and they did not see the splendors below, for if the ships sank they were drowned and came as corpses to the Sea-king's palace.

When the sisters thus rose up arm in arm in the evening-time through the water the little sister stood all alone, looking after them, and she felt as if she must weep; but the sea-maid has no tears, and for this reason she suffers far more acutely.

"Oh, if I were only fifteen years old!" said she. "I know I shall love the world up there very much, and the people who live and dwell there."

At last she was really fifteen years old.

"Now, you see, you are grown up," said the grandmother, the old dowager. "Come, let me adorn you like your sisters."

And she put a wreath of white lilies in the little maid's hair, but each flower was half a pearl; and the old lady let eight great oysters attach themselves to the Princess's tail in token of her high rank.

"But that hurts so!" said the little Sea-maid.

"Yes, pride must suffer pain," replied the old lady.

Oh, how glad she would have been to shake off all the tokens of rank and lay aside the heavy wreath! Her red flowers in the garden suited her better; but she could not help it. "Farewell!" she said; and then she rose, light and clear as a water-bubble, up through the sea.

The sun had just set when she lifted her head above the sea,

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but all the clouds still shone like roses and gold, and in the pale-red sky the evening stars gleamed bright and beautiful. The air was mild and fresh and the sea quite calm. There lay a great ship with three masts; one single sail only was set, for not a breeze stirred, and around in the shrouds and on the yards sat the sailors. There was music and singing, and, as the evening closed in, hundreds of colored lanterns were lighted up and looked as if the flags of every nation were waving in the air. The little Sea-maid swam straight to the cabin window, and each time the sea lifted her up she could look through the panes, which were clear as crystal, and see many people standing within, dressed in their best. But the handsomest of all was the young Prince with the great black eyes; he was certainly not much more than sixteen years old. It was his birthday, and that was the cause of all this feasting. The sailors were dancing upon deck, and when the young Prince came out more than a hundred rockets rose into the air; they shone like day, so that the little Sea-maid was quite startled and dived under the water; but soon she put out her head again, and then it seemed just as if all the stars of heaven were falling down upon her. She had never seen such fireworks. Great suns spurted fire all around, glorious fiery fishes flew up into the blue air, and everything was mirrored in the clear blue sea. The ship itself was so brightly lit up that every separate rope could be seen, and the people, therefore, appeared the more plainly. Oh, how handsome the young Prince was! And he pressed the people's hands and smiled, while the music rang out in the glorious night.

It became late; but the little Sea-maid could not turn her eyes from the ship and from the beautiful Prince. The colored lanterns were extinguished, rockets ceased to fly into the air, and no more cannons were fired; but there was a murmuring and a buzzing deep down in the sea; and she sat on the water, swaying up and down, so that she could look into the cabin. But as the ship got more way one sail after another was spread. And now the waves rose higher, great clouds came up, and in the distance there was lightning. Oh, it was going to be fearful

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weather; therefore the sailors furled the sails. The great ship flew in swift career over the wild sea; the waters rose up like great black mountains, which wanted to roll over the masts; but like a swan the ship dived into the valleys between these high waves, and then let itself be lifted on high again. To the little Sea-maid this seemed merry sport, but to the sailors it appeared very differently. The ship groaned and creaked; the thick planks were bent by the heavy blows; the sea broke into the ship; the mainmast snapped in two like a thin reed; and the ship lay over on her side, while the water rushed into the hold. Now the little Sea-maid saw that the people were in peril; she herself was obliged to take care to avoid the beams and fragments of the ship which were floating about on the waters. One moment it was so pitch-dark that not a single object could be described, but when it lightened it became so bright that she could distinguish every one on board. She looked particularly for the young Prince, and when the ship parted she saw him sink into the sea. Then she was very glad, for now he would come down to her. But then she remembered that people could not live in the water, and that when he got down to her father's palace he would certainly be dead. No, he must not die; so she swam about among the beams and planks that strewed the surface, quite forgetting that one of them might have crushed her. Diving down deep under the water, she again rose high up among the waves, and in this way she at last came to the Prince, who could scarcely swim longer in that stormy sea. His arms and legs began to fail him, his beautiful eyes closed, and he would have died had the little Sea-maid not come. She held his head up over the water, and then allowed the waves to carry her and him whither they listed.

When the morning came the storm had passed by. Of the ship not a fragment was to be seen. The sun came up red and shining out of the water; it was as if its beams brought back the hue of life to the cheeks of the Prince, but his eyes remained closed. The Sea-maid kissed his high, fair forehead and put back his wet hair, and he seemed to her to be like the marble

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statue in her little garden; she kissed him again and hoped that he might live.

Now she saw in front of her the dry land—high blue mountains on whose summits the white snow gleamed as if swans were lying there. Down on the coast were glorious green forests, and a building—she could not tell whether it was a church or a convent—stood there. In its garden grew orange and citron trees, and high palms waved in front of the gate. The sea formed a little bay there; it was quite calm, but very deep. Straight toward the rock where the fine white sand had been cast up she swam with the handsome Prince and laid him upon the sand, taking especial care that his head was raised in the warm sunshine.

Now all the bells rang in the great white building, and many young girls came walking through the garden. Then the little Sea-maid swam farther out between some high stones that stood up out of the water, laid some sea-foam upon her hair and neck, so that no one could see her little countenance, and then she watched to see who would come to the poor Prince.

In a short time a young girl went that way. She seemed to be much startled, but only for a moment; then she brought more people, and the Sea-maid perceived that the Prince came back to life and that he smiled at all around him. But he did not cast a smile at her; he did not know that she had saved him. And she felt very sorrowful; and when he was led away into the great building she dived mournfully under the water and returned to her father's palace.

She had always been gentle and melancholy, but now she became much more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen the first time she rose up to the surface, but she would tell them nothing.

Many an evening and many a morning she went up to the place where she had left the Prince. She saw how the fruits of the garden grew ripe and were gathered; she saw how the snow melted on the high mountain; but she did not see the Prince, and so she always returned home more sorrowful still. Then her only comfort was to sit in her little garden and to wind

FAIRY TALES

her arm round the beautiful marble statue that resembled the Prince; but she did not tend her flowers; they grew as if in a wilderness over the paths, and trailed their long leaves and stalks up into the branches of trees, so that it became quite dark there.

At last she could endure it no longer, and told all to one of her sisters, and then the others heard of it, too; but nobody knew of it beyond these and a few other sea-maids, who told the secret to their intimate friends. One of these knew who the Prince was; she, too, had seen the festival on board the ship, and she announced whence he came and where his kingdom lay.

“Come, little sister!” said the other Princesses; and, linking their arms together, they rose up in a long row out of the sea at the place where they knew the Prince’s palace lay.

This palace was built of a kind of bright-yellow stone, with great marble staircases, one of which led directly down into the sea. Over the roof rose splendid gilt cupolas, and between the pillars which surrounded the whole dwelling stood marble statues which looked as if they were alive. Through the clear glass in the high windows one looked into the glorious halls, where costly silk hangings and tapestries were hung up, and all the walls were decked with splendid pictures, so that it was a perfect delight to see them. In the midst of the greatest of these halls a great fountain plashed; its jets shot high up toward the glass dome in the ceiling, through which the sun shone down upon the water and upon the lovely plants growing in the great basin.

Now she knew where he lived, and many an evening and many a night she spent there on the water. She swam far closer to the land than any of the others would have dared to venture; indeed, she went quite up the narrow channel under the splendid marble balcony which threw a broad shadow upon the water. Here she sat and watched the young Prince, who thought himself quite alone in the bright moonlight.

Many an evening she saw him sailing, amid the sounds of music, in his costly boat with the waving flags; she peeped up through the green reeds, and when the wind caught her silver-

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white veil, and any one saw it, he thought it was a white swan spreading out its wings.

Many a night when the fishermen were on the sea with their torches she heard much good told of the young Prince, and she rejoiced that she had saved his life when he was driven about, half dead, on the wild billows; she thought how quietly his head had reclined on her bosom and how heartily she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of it, and could not even dream of her.

More and more she began to love mankind, and more and more she wished to be able to wander about among those whose world seemed far larger than her own. For they could fly over the sea in ships, and mount up the high hills far above the clouds, and the lands they possessed stretched out in woods and fields farther than her eyes could reach. There was much she wished to know, but her sisters could not answer all her questions; therefore she applied to the old grandmother, and the old lady knew the upper world, which she rightly called "the countries above the sea," very well.

"If people are not drowned," asked the little Sea-maid, "can they live for ever? Do they not die as we die down here in the sea?"

"Yes," replied the old lady. "They, too, must die, and their life is even shorter than ours. We can live to be three hundred years old, but when we cease to exist here we are turned into foam on the surface of the water and have not even a grave down here among those we love. We have not an immortal soul; we never receive another life; we are like the green seaweed which, when once cut through, can never bloom again. Men, on the contrary, have a soul which lives for ever, which lives on after the body has become dust; it mounts up through the clear air, up to all the shining stars! As we rise up out of the waters and behold all the lands of the earth, so they rise up to unknown glorious places which we can never see."

"Why did we not receive an immortal soul?" asked the little Sea-maid, sorrowfully. "I would gladly give all the hundreds of

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years I have to live to be a human being only for one day, and to have a hope of partaking the heavenly kingdom."

"You must not think of that," replied the old lady. "We feel ourselves far more happy and far better than mankind yonder."

"Then I am to die and be cast as foam upon the sea, not hearing the music of the waves, nor seeing the pretty flowers and the red sun? Can I not do anything to win an immortal soul?"

"No!" answered the grandmother. "Only if a man were to love you so that you should be more to him than father or mother; if he should cling to you with his every thought and with all his love, and let the priest lay his right hand in yours with a promise of faithfulness here and in all eternity, then his soul would be imparted to your body and you would receive a share of the happiness of mankind. He would give a soul to you and yet retain his own. But that can never come to pass. What is considered beautiful here in the sea—the fish-tail—they would consider ugly on the earth: they don't understand it; there one must have two clumsy supports which they call legs to be called beautiful."

Then the little Sea-maid sighed and looked mournfully upon her fish-tail.

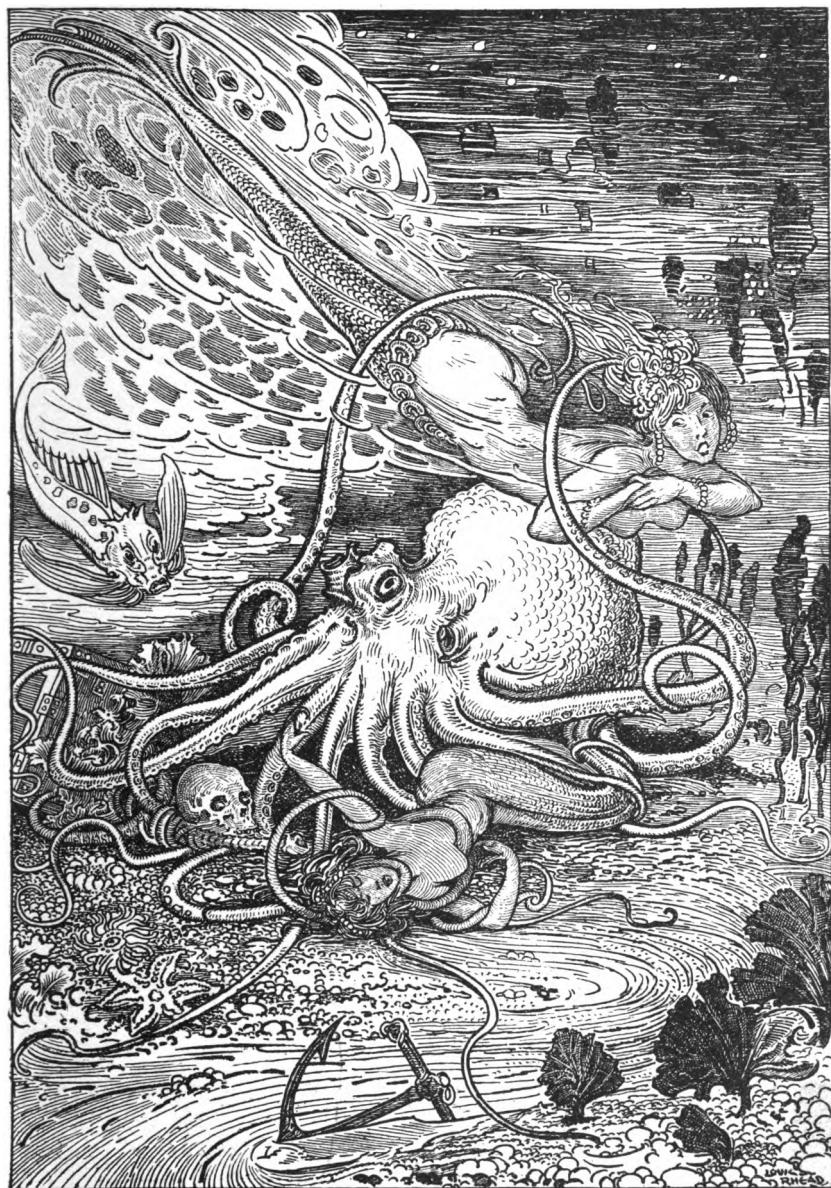
"Let us be glad!" said the old lady. "Let us dance and leap in the three hundred years we have to live. That is certainly long enough; after that we can rest ourselves all the better. This evening we shall have a court ball."

It was a splendid sight, such as is never seen on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the great dancing-saloon were of thick but transparent glass. Several hundreds of huge shells, pink and grass-green, stood on each side in rows, filled with a blue fire which lit up the whole hall and shone through the walls, so that the sea without was quite lit up; one could see all the innumerable fishes, great and small, swimming toward the glass walls; of some the scales gleamed with purple, while in others they shone like silver and gold. Through the midst of the hall flowed a

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broad stream, and on this the sea-men and sea-women danced to their own charming songs. Such beautiful voices the people of the earth have not. The little Sea-maid sang the most sweetly of all, and the whole court applauded with hands and tails, and for a moment she felt gay in her heart, for she knew she had the loveliest voice of all in the sea or on the earth. But soon she thought again of the world above her; she could not forget the charming Prince, or her sorrow at not having an immortal soul like his. Therefore she crept out of her father's palace, and while everything within was joy and gladness she sat melancholy in her little garden. Then she heard the bugle-horn sounding through the waters, and thought, "Now he is certainly sailing above, he on whom my wishes hang and in whose hand I should like to lay my life's happiness. I will dare everything to win him and an immortal soul. While my sisters dance yonder in my father's palace I will go to the Sea-witch of whom I have always been so much afraid; perhaps she can counsel and help me."

Now the little Sea-maid went out of her garden to the foaming whirlpools behind which the sorceress dwelt. She had never traveled that way before. No flowers grew there, no sea-grass; only the naked gray sand stretched out toward the whirlpools, where the water rushed round like roaring mill-wheels and tore down everything it seized into the deep. Through the midst of these rushing whirlpools she was obliged to pass to get into the domain of the witch; and for a long way there was no other road except one which led over warm, gushing mud; this the witch called her turf-moor. Behind it lay her house, in the midst of a singular forest, in which all the trees and bushes were polyps—half animals, half plants. They looked like hundred-headed snakes growing up out of the earth. All the branches were long, slimy arms, with fingers like supple worms, and they moved limb by limb from the root to the farthest point; all that they could seize on in the water they held fast and did not let it go. The little Sea-maid stopped in front of them, quite frightened; her heart beat with fear, and she was near turning back; but then she thought of the Prince and the human soul, and her courage



ON THE WAY TO THE HOME OF THE SEA-WITCH

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came back again. She bound her long, flying hair closely around her head, so that the polyps might not seize it. She put her hands together on her breast, and then shot forward as a fish shoots through the water, among the ugly polyps which stretched out their supple arms and fingers after her. She saw that each of them held something it had seized with hundreds of little arms, like strong iron bands. People who had perished at sea and had sunk deep down looked forth as white skeletons from among the polyps' arms; ships' oars and chests they also held fast, and skeletons of land-animals, and a little sea-woman whom they had caught and strangled; and this seemed the most terrible of all to our little Princess.

Now she came to a great marshy place in the wood where fat water-snakes rolled about, showing their ugly cream-colored bodies. In the midst of this marsh was a house built of white bones of shipwrecked men; there sat the Sea-witch, feeding a toad out of her mouth, just as a person might feed a little canary-bird with sugar. She called the ugly fat water-snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl upward and all about her.

"I know what you want," said the Sea-witch. "It is stupid of you, but you shall have your way, for it will bring you to grief, my pretty Princess. You want to get rid of your fish-tail, and to have two supports instead of it, like those the people of the earth walk with, so that the young Prince may fall in love with you and you may get an immortal soul." And with this the Witch laughed loudly and disagreeably, so that the toad and the water-snakes tumbled down to the ground, where they crawled about. "You come just in time," said the Witch. "After to-morrow at sunrise I could not help you until another year had gone by. I will prepare a draught for you, with which you must swim to land to-morrow before the sun rises and seat yourself there and drink it; then your tail will shrivel up and become what the people of the earth call legs; but it will hurt you—it will seem as if you were cut with a sharp sword. All who see you will declare you to be the prettiest human being they ever beheld. You will keep your graceful walk; no dancer will be able to move

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so lightly as you, but every step you take will be as if you trod upon sharp knives and as if your blood must flow. If you will bear all this I can help you."

"Yes!" said the little Sea-maid, with a trembling voice; and she thought of the Prince and the immortal soul.

"But remember," said the Witch, "when you have once received a human form you can never be a sea-maid again; you can never return through the water to your sisters or to your father's palace; and if you do not win the Prince's love so that he forgets father and mother for your sake, is attached to you heart and soul, and tells the priest to join your hands, you will not receive an immortal soul. On the first morning after he has married another your heart will break and you will become foam on the water."

"I will do it," said the little Sea-maid; but she became as pale as death.

"But you must pay me, too," said the Witch; "and it is not a trifle that I ask. You have the finest voice of all here at the bottom of the water; with that you think to enchant him; but this voice you must give to me. The best thing you possess I will have for my costly draught! I must give you my own blood in it so that the draught may be sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take away my voice," said the little Sea-maid, "what will remain to me?"

"Your beautiful form," replied the Witch, "your graceful walk, and your speaking eyes; with those you can take captive a human heart. Well, have you lost your courage? Put out your little tongue, and then I will cut it off for my payment, and then you shall have the strong draught."

"It shall be so," said the little Sea-maid.

And the Witch put on her pot to brew the draught.

"Cleanliness is a good thing," said she; and she cleaned out the pot with the snakes, which she tied up in a big knot; then she scratched herself and let her black blood drop into it. The steam rose up in the strangest forms, enough to frighten the beholder. Every moment the Witch threw something else into

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the pot; and when it boiled thoroughly there was a sound like the weeping of a crocodile. At last the draught was ready. It looked like the purest water.

"There you have it," said the Witch.

And she cut off the little Sea-maid's tongue, so that now the Princess was dumb and could neither sing nor speak.

She could see her father's palace. The torches were extinguished in the great hall, and they were certainly sleeping within, but she did not dare to go to them, now that she was dumb and was about to quit them for ever. She felt as if her heart would burst with sorrow. She crept into the garden, took a flower from each bed of her sisters, blew a thousand kisses toward the palace, and rose up through the dark-blue sea.

The sun had not yet risen when she beheld the Prince's castle and mounted the splendid marble staircase. The moon shone beautifully clear. The little Sea-maid drank the burning sharp draught, and it seemed as if a two-edged sword went through her delicate body. She fell down in a swoon and lay as if she were dead. When the sun shone out over the sea she awoke and felt a sharp pain; but just before her stood the handsome young Prince. He fixed his coal-black eyes upon her so that she cast down her own, and then she perceived that her fish-tail was gone and that she had the prettiest pair of white feet a little girl could have. But she had no clothes, so she shrouded herself in her long hair. The Prince asked how she came there; and she looked at him mildly but very mournfully with her dark-blue eyes, for she could not speak. Then he took her by the hand and led her into the castle. Each step she took was, as the Witch had told her, as if she had been treading on pointed needles and knives, but she bore it gladly. At the Prince's right hand she moved on, light as a soap-bubble, and he, like all the rest, was astonished at her graceful, swaying movements.

She now received splendid clothes of silk and muslin. In the castle she was the most beautiful creature to be seen; but she was dumb and could neither sing nor speak. Lovely slaves, dressed in silk and gold, stepped forward and sang before the

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Prince and his royal parents; one sang more charmingly than all the rest, and the Prince smiled at her and clapped his hands. Then the little Sea-maid became sad; she knew that she herself had sung far more sweetly, and thought, "Oh, that he only knew I had given away my voice for ever to be with him!"

Now the slaves danced pretty waving dancing to the loveliest music; then the little Sea-maid lifted her beautiful white arms, stood on the tips of her toes, and glided dancing over the floor as no one had yet danced. At each movement her beauty became more apparent and her eyes spoke more directly to the heart than the songs of the slaves.

All were delighted, and especially the Prince, who called her his little foundling; and she danced again and again, although every time she touched the earth it seemed as if she were treading upon sharp knives. The Prince said that she should always remain with him, and she received permission to sleep on a velvet cushion before his door.

He had a page's dress made for her that she might accompany him on horseback. They rode through the blooming woods, where the green boughs swept their shoulders and the little birds sang in the fresh leaves. She climbed with the Prince up the high mountains; and, although her delicate feet bled so that even the others could see it, she laughed at it herself, and followed him until they saw the clouds sailing beneath them like a flock of birds traveling to distant lands.

At home in the Prince's castle, when the others slept at night, she went out onto the broad marble steps. It cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea-water, and then she thought of the dear ones in the deep.

Once, in the night-time, her sisters came, arm in arm. Sadly they sang as they floated above the water; and she beckoned to them, and they recognized her and told her how she had grieved them all. Then she visited them every night; and once she saw in the distance her old grandmother, who had not been above the surface for many years, and the Sea-king with his



THE PRINCE ASKED HOW SHE CAME THERE

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crown upon his head. They stretched out their hands toward her, but did not venture so near the land as her sisters.

Day by day the Prince grew more fond of her. He loved her as one loves a dear, good child, but it never came into his head to make her his wife; and yet she must become his wife or she would not receive an immortal soul and would have to become foam on the sea on his marriage morning.

“Do you not love me best of them all?” the eyes of the little Sea-maid seemed to say when he took her in his arms and kissed her fair forehead.

“Yes, you are the dearest to me!” said the Prince, “for you have the best heart of them all. You are the most devoted to me, and are like a young girl whom I once saw but whom I certainly shall not find again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked. The waves threw me ashore near a holy temple where several young girls performed the service. The youngest of them found me by the shore and saved my life. I only saw her twice; she was the only one in the world I could love; but you chase her picture out of my mind, you are so like her. She belongs to the holy temple, and therefore my good fortune has sent you to me. We will never part!”

“Ah! he does not know that I saved his life,” thought the little Sea-maid. “I carried him over the sea to the wood where the temple stands. I sat there under the foam and looked to see if any one would come. I saw the beautiful girl whom he loves better than me.” And the Sea-maid sighed deeply—she could not weep. “The maiden belongs to the holy temple,” she said, “and will never come out into the world—they will meet no more. I am with him and see him every day; I will cherish him, love him, give up my life for him.”

But now they said that the Prince was to marry and that the beautiful daughter of a neighboring King was to be his wife, and that was why such a beautiful ship was being prepared. The story was that the Prince traveled to visit the land of the neighboring King, but it was done that he might see the King’s daughter. A great company was to go with him. The little

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Sea-maid shook her head and smiled; she knew the Prince's thoughts far better than any of the others.

"I must travel," he had said to her; "I must see the beautiful Princess. My parents desire it, but they do not wish to compel me to bring her home as my bride. I cannot love her. She is not like the beautiful maiden in the temple whom you resemble. If I were to choose a bride I would rather choose you, my dear dumb foundling with the speaking eyes."

And he kissed her red lips and played with her long hair, so that she dreamed of happiness and of an immortal soul.

"You are not afraid of the sea, my dumb child?" said he, when they stood on the superb ship which was to carry him to the country of the neighboring King; and he told her of storm and calm, of strange fishes in the deep, and of what the divers had seen there. And she smiled at his tales, for she knew better than any one what happened at the bottom of the sea.

In the moonlight night, when all were asleep except the steersman who stood by the helm, she sat on the side of the ship, gazing down through the clear water. She fancied she saw her father's palace. High on the battlements stood her old grandmother, with the silver crown on her head, and looking through the rushing tide up to the vessel's keel. Then her sisters came forth over the water and looked mournfully at her and wrung their white hands. She beckoned to them, smiled, and wished to tell them that she was well and happy; but the cabin-boy approached her and her sisters dived down, so that he thought the white objects he had seen were foam on the surface of the water.

The next morning the ship sailed into the harbor of the neighboring King's splendid city. All the church-bells sounded, and from the high towers the trumpets were blown, while the soldiers stood there with flying colors and flashing bayonets. Each day brought some festivity with it; balls and entertainments followed one another; but the Princess was not yet there. People said she was being educated in a holy temple far away, where she was learning every royal virtue. At last she arrived.

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The little Sea-maid was anxious to see the beauty of the Princess, and was obliged to acknowledge it. A more lovely apparition she had never beheld. The Princess's skin was pure and clear, and behind the long dark eyelashes there smiled a pair of faithful, dark-blue eyes.

"You are the lady who saved me when I lay like a corpse upon the shore!" said the Prince; and he folded his blushing bride to his heart. "Oh, I am too, too happy!" he cried to the little Sea-maid. "The best hope I could have is fulfilled. You will rejoice at my happiness, for you are the most devoted to me of them all!"

And the little Sea-maid kissed his hand; and it seemed already to her as if her heart was broken, for his wedding morning was to bring death to her and change her into foam on the sea.

All the church-bells were ringing, and heralds rode about the streets announcing the betrothal. On every altar fragrant oil was burning in gorgeous lamps of silver. The priests swung their censers, and bride and bridegroom laid hand in hand and received the bishop's blessing. The little Sea-maid was dressed in cloth of gold, and held up the bride's train, but her ears heard nothing of the festive music, her eyes marked not the holy ceremony; she thought of the night of her death, and of all that she had lost in this world.

On the same evening the bride and the bridegroom went on board the ship. The cannon roared, all the flags waved; in the midst of the ship a costly tent of gold and purple, with the most beautiful cushions, had been set up, and there the married pair were to sleep in the cool, still night.

The sails swelled in the wind, and the ship glided smoothly and lightly over the clear sea. When it grew dark colored lamps were lighted and the sailors danced merry dances on deck. The little Sea-maid thought of the first time when she had risen up out of the sea and beheld a similar scene of splendor and joy; and she joined in the whirling dance, and flitted on as the swallow flits away when he is pursued; and all shouted and admired her, for she had danced so prettily. Her delicate feet were cut as if

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with knives, but she did not feel it, for her heart was wounded far more painfully. She knew this was the last evening on which she should see him for whom she had left her friends and her home and had given up her beautiful voice and had suffered unheard-of pains every day while he was utterly unconscious of all. It was the last evening she should breathe the same air with him and behold the starry sky and the deep sea; and everlasting night without thought or dream awaited her, for she had no soul and could win none. And everything was merriment and gladness on the ship till past midnight, and she laughed and danced with thoughts of death in her heart. The Prince kissed his beautiful bride, and she played with his raven hair, and hand in hand they went to rest in the splendid tent. It became quiet on the ship; only the helmsman stood by the helm; and the little Sea-maid leaned her white arms upon the bulwark and gazed out toward the east for the morning dawn. The first ray, she knew, would kill her. Then she saw her sisters rising out of the flood; they were pale, like herself; their long, beautiful hair no longer waved in the wind; it had been cut off.

"We have given it to the Witch that we might bring you help, so that you may not die to-night. She has given us a knife; here it is—look! how sharp! Before the sun rises you must thrust it into the heart of the Prince, and when the warm blood falls upon your feet they will grow together again into a fish-tail, and you will become a sea-maid again and come back to us and live your three hundred years before you become dead salt sea-foam. Make haste! He or you must die before the sun rises! Our old grandmother mourns so that her white hair has fallen off, as ours did under the Witch's scissors. Kill the Prince and come back! Make haste! Do you see that red streak in the sky? In a few minutes the sun will rise, and you must die!"

And they gave a very mournful sigh and vanished beneath the waves. The little Sea-maid drew back the curtain from the tent and saw the beautiful bride lying with her head on the Prince's breast; and she bent down and kissed his brow, and gazed up to the sky where the morning red was gleaming brighter

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and brighter; then she looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes upon the Prince, who in his sleep murmured his bride's name. She only was in his thoughts, and the knife trembled in the Sea-maid's hand. But then she flung it far away into the waves—they gleamed red where it fell, and it seemed as if drops of blood spurted up out of the water. Once more she looked with half-extinguished eyes upon the Prince, then she threw herself from the ship into the sea, and felt her frame dissolving into foam.

Now the sun rose up out of the sea. The rays fell mild and warm upon the cold sea-foam, and the little Sea-maid felt nothing of death. She saw the bright sun, and over her head sailed hundreds of glorious ethereal beings—she could see them through the white sails of the ship and the red clouds of the sky; their speech was melody, but of such a spiritual kind that no human ear could hear it, just as no human eye could see them; without wings they floated through the air. The little Sea-maid found that she had a frame like these, and was rising more and more out of the foam.

“Whither am I going?” she asked; and her voice sounded like that of the other beings, so spiritual that no earthly music could be compared to it.

“To the daughters of the air!” replied the others. “A sea-maid has no immortal soul, and can never gain one, except she win the love of a mortal. Her eternal existence depends upon the power of another. The daughters of the air have likewise no immortal soul, but they can make themselves one through good deeds. We fly to the hot countries, where the close, pestilient air kills men, and there we bring coolness. We disperse the fragrance of the flowers through the air and spread refreshment and health. After we have striven for three hundred years to accomplish all the good we can bring about we receive an immortal soul and take part in the eternal happiness of men. You, poor little Sea-maid, have striven with your whole heart after the goal we pursue; you have suffered and endured; you have by good works raised yourself to the world of spirits, and can gain an immortal soul after three hundred years.”

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And the little Sea-maid lifted her glorious eyes toward God's sun, and for the first time she felt them fill with tears. On the ship there was again life and noise. She saw the Prince and his bride searching for her; then they looked mournfully at the pearly foam, as if they knew that she had thrown herself into the waves. Invisible, she kissed the forehead of the bride, fanned the Prince, and mounted with the other children of the air on the rosy cloud which floated through the ether. After three hundred years we shall thus float into paradise!

"And we may even get there sooner," whispered a daughter of the air. "Invisibly we float into the houses of men where children are, and for every day on which we find a good child that brings joy to its parents and deserves their love, our time of probation is shortened. The child does not know when we fly through the room; and when we smile with joy at the child's conduct a year is counted off from the three hundred; but when we see a naughty or a wicked child we shed tears of grief, and for every tear a day is added to our time of trial."





VII

SOUP MADE OF A SAUSAGE-STICK

I

“**T**HAT was a splendid dinner yesterday,” observed an old Mouse of the female sex to another who had not been at the feast. ‘I sat number twenty-one from the old Mouse King, so that I was not badly placed. Should you like to hear the order of the banquet? The courses were very well arranged—moldy bread, bacon rind, tallow candle, and sausage, and then the same dishes over again from the beginning. It was just as good as having two banquets in succession. There was as much jovialty and agreeable jesting as in the family circle. Nothing was left but the sausage-sticks. And the discourse turned upon these; and at last the expression, ‘Soup of a sausage-stick,’ was mentioned. Every one had heard the proverb, but no one had ever tasted the soup, much less prepared it. A capital toast was drunk to the inventor of the soup, and it was said he deserved to be a relieving officer. Was not that witty? And the old Mouse King stood up and promised that the young female mouse who could best prepare that soup should be his Queen; a year and a day was allowed for the purpose.”

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"That was not at all bad," said the other Mouse; "but how does one prepare this soup?"

"Ah, how is it prepared? That is just what all the young female mice and the old ones, too, are asking. They would all very much like to be Queen, but they don't want to take the trouble to go out into the world to learn how to prepare the soup, and that they would certainly have to do. But every one has not the gift of leaving the family circle and the chimney-corner. In foreign parts one can't get cheese-rinds and bacon every day. No, one must bear hunger, and perhaps be eaten up alive by a cat."

Such were probably the considerations by which the majority were deterred from going out into the wide world and gaining information. Only four little Mice announced themselves ready to depart. They were young and brisk, but poor. Each of them wished to proceed to one of the four quarters of the globe, and then it would become manifest which of them was favored by fortune. Each one took a sausage-stick so as to keep in mind the object of the journey. The stiff sausage-stick was to be to them as a pilgrim's staff.

It was at the beginning of May that they set out, and they did not return till the May of the following year; and then only three of them appeared. The fourth did not report herself, nor was there any intelligence of her, though the day of trial was close at hand.

"Yes, there's always some drawback in even the pleasantest affair," said the Mouse King.

And then he gave orders that all mice within a circuit of many miles should be invited. They were to assemble in the kitchen, where the three traveled Mice would stand up in a row while a sausage-stick shrouded in crape was set up as a memento of the fourth, who was missing. No one was to proclaim his opinion till the Mouse King had settled what was to be said. And now let us hear.

FAIRY TALES

II

WHAT THE FIRST LITTLE MOUSE HAD SEEN AND LEARNED IN HER TRAVELS

"WHEN I went out into the wide world," said the little Mouse, "I thought, as many think at my age, that I had already learned everything; but that was not the case. Years must pass before one gets so far. I went to sea at once. I went in a ship that steered toward the north. They had told me that the ship's cook must know how to manage things at sea, but it is easy enough to manage things when one has plenty of sides of bacon and whole tubs of salt pork and moldy flour. One has delicate living on board; but one does not learn to prepare soup of a sausage-stick. We sailed along for many days and nights; the ship rocked fearfully, and we did not get off without a wetting. When we at last reached the port to which we were bound I left the ship; and it was high up in the far north.

"It is a wonderful thing to go out of one's own corner at home and sail in a ship where one has a sort of corner, too, and then suddenly to find one's self hundreds of miles away in a strange land. I saw great pathless forests of pine and birch, which smelt so strong that I sneezed and thought of sausage. There were great lakes there, too. When I came close to them the waters were quite clear, but from a distance they looked black as ink. Great swans floated upon them; I thought at first they were spots of foam, they lay so still, but then I saw them walk and fly, and I recognized them. They belong to the goose family—one can see that by their walk, for no one can deny his parentage. I kept with my own kind. I associated with the forest and field mice, who, by the way, know very little, especially as regards cookery, though this was the very subject that had brought me abroad. The thought that soup might be boiled out of a sausage-stick was such a startling statement to them that it flew at once from mouth to mouth through the whole forest. They declared the problem could never be solved; and

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little did I think that there, on the very first night, I should be initiated into the method of its preparation. It was in the height of summer, and that, the Mice said, was the reason why the wood smelt so strongly and why the herbs were so fragrant and the lakes so transparent and yet so dark, with their white, swimming swans.

“On the margin of the wood, among three or four houses, a pole as tall as the mainmast of a ship had been erected, and from its summit hung wreaths and fluttering ribbons: this was called a May-pole. Men and maids danced round the tree and sang as loudly as they could to the violin of the fiddler. There were merry doings at sundown and in the moonlight, but I took no part in them—what has a little mouse to do with a May dance? I sat in the soft moss and held my sausage-stick fast. The moon threw its beams especially upon one spot, where a tree stood, covered with moss so exceedingly fine, I may almost venture to say it was as fine as the skin of the Mouse King; but it was of a green color, and that is a great relief to the eye.

“All at once the most charming little people came marching forth. They were only tall enough to reach to my knee. They looked like men, but were better proportioned: they called themselves elves, and had delicate clothes on, of flowers trimmed with the wings of flies and gnats, which had a very good appearance. Directly they appeared they seemed to be seeking for something—I knew not what; but at last some of them came toward me, and the chief pointed to my sausage-stick and said, ‘That is just such a one as we want; it is pointed; it is capital’ and the longer he looked at my staff the more delighted he became.

“‘I will lend it,’ I said, ‘but not to keep.’

“‘Not to keep!’ they all repeated; and they seized the sausage-stick, which I gave up to them, and danced away to the spot where the fine moss grew, and here they set up the stick in the midst of the green. They wanted to have a May-pole of their own, and the one they now had seemed cut out for them; and they decorated it so that it was beautiful to behold.

“First, little spiders spun it round with gold thread, and hung



THEY INVITED MRS. MOUSE TO BE PRESENT AT
THE FEAST

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it all over with fluttering veils and flags so finely woven, bleached so snowy white in the moonshine that they dazzled my eyes. They took colors from the butterfly's wing and strewed these over the white linen, and flowers and diamonds gleamed upon it, so that I did not know my sausage-stick again; there is not in all the world such a May-pole as they made of it. And now came the real great party of elves. They were quite without clothes, and looked as genteel as possible; and they invited me to be present at the feast; but I was to keep at a certain distance, for I was too large for them.

"And now began such music! It sounded like thousands of glass bells, so full, so rich that I thought the swans were singing. I fancied also that I heard the voice of the cuckoo and the blackbird, and at last the whole forest seemed to join in. I heard children's voices, the sound of bells, and the song of birds—the most glorious melodies—and all came from the elves' May-pole—namely, my sausage-stick. I should never have believed that so much could come out of it, but that depends very much upon the hands into which it falls. I was quite touched. I wept, as a little mouse may weep, with pure pleasure.

"The night was far too short; but it is not longer up yonder at that season. In the morning dawn the breeze began to blow, the mirror of the forest lake was covered with ripples, and all the delicate veils and flags fluttered in the air. The waving garlands of spider's web, the hanging bridges and balustrades, and whatever else they are called, flew away as if they were nothing at all. Six elves brought me back my sausage-stick and asked me at the same time if I had any wish that they could gratify; so I asked them if they could tell me how soup was made of a sausage-stick.

"How *we* do it?" asked the chief of the elves, with a smile. "Why, you have just seen it. I fancy you hardly know your sausage-stick again."

"You only mean that as a joke," I replied. And then I told them in so many words why I had undertaken a journey, and what great hopes were founded on the operation at home.

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'What advantage,' I asked, 'can accrue to our Mouse King, and to our whole powerful state, from the fact of my having witnessed all this festivity? I cannot shake it out of the sausage-stick and say, "Look, here is the stick, now the soup will come." That would be a dish that could only be put on the table when the guests had dined.'

"Then the Elf dipped his little finger into the cup of a blue violet and said to me:

"See here! I will anoint your pilgrim's staff, and when you go back to your country and come to the castle of the Mouse King you have but to touch him with the staff and violets will spring forth and cover its whole surface, even in the coldest winter time. And so I think I've given you something to carry home, and a little more than something!"

But before the little Mouse said what this "something more" was she stretched her staff out toward the King, and in very truth the most beautiful bunch of violets burst forth, and the scent was so powerful that the Mouse King incontinently ordered the mice who stood nearest the chimney to thrust their tails into the fire and create a smell of burning, for the odor of the violets was not to be borne, and was not of the kind he liked.

"But what was the 'something more' of which you spoke?" asked the Mouse King.

"Why," the little Mouse answered, "I think it is what they call effect!" And herewith she turned the staff round and, lo! there was not a single flower to be seen upon it; she only held the naked stick, and lifted this up as a musical conductor lifts his *bâton*. "'Violets,' the Elf said to me, 'are for sight and smell and touch. Therefore it yet remains to provide for hearing and taste!'"

And now the little Mouse began to beat time; and music was heard, not such as sounded in the forest among the elves, but such as is heard in the kitchen. There was a bubbling sound of boiling and roasting, and all at once it seemed as if the sound were rushing through every chimney and pots or kettles were boiling over. The fire-shovel hammered upon the brass kettle;

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and then, on a sudden, all was quiet again. They heard the quiet, subdued song of the tea-kettle, and it was wonderful to hear—they could not quite tell if the kettle were beginning to sing or leaving off; and the little pot simmered, and the big pot simmered, and neither cared for the other; there seemed to be no reason at all in the pots. The little Mouse flourished her *bâton* more and more wildly; the pots foamed and threw up large bubbles and boiled over, and the wind roared and whistled through the chimney. Oh, it became so terrible that the little Mouse lost her stick at last.

“That was a heavy soup!” said the Mouse King. “Shall we not soon hear about the preparation?”

“That was all,” said the little Mouse, with a bow.

“That all! Then we should be glad to hear what the next has to relate,” said the Mouse King.

III

WHAT THE SECOND LITTLE MOUSE HAD TO TELL

“I WAS born in the palace library,” said the second Mouse. “I and several members of our family never knew the happiness of getting into the dining-room, much less into the store-room; on my journey and here to-day are the only times I have seen a kitchen. We have indeed often been compelled to suffer hunger in the library, but we get a good deal of knowledge. The rumor penetrated even to us of the royal prize offered to those who could cook soup out of a sausage-stick; and it was my old grandmother who thereupon ferreted out a manuscript, which she certainly could not read, but which she had heard read out, and in which it was written, ‘Those who are poets can boil soup out of a sausage-stick.’ She asked me if I were a poet. I felt quite innocent on the subject, and then she told me I must go out and manage to become one. I again asked what was requisite in that particular, for it was as difficult for me to find that out as to prepare the soup, but grandmother had heard a good deal

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of reading, and she said that three things were especially necessary: 'Understanding, imagination, feeling—if you can manage to obtain these three you are a poet, and the sausage-stick affair will be quite easy to you.'

"And I went forth and marched toward the west, away into the wide world, to become a poet.

"Understanding is the most important thing in every affair. I knew that, for the two other things are not held in half such respect, and consequently I went out first to seek understanding. Yes, where does he dwell? 'Go to the ant and be wise,' said the great King of the Jews; I knew that from my library experience; and I never stopped till I came to the first great ant-hill, and there I placed myself on the watch to become wise.

"The ants are a respectable people. They are understanding itself. Everything with them is like a well-worked sum that comes right. To work and to lay eggs, they say, is to live while you live, and to provide for posterity; and accordingly that is what they do. They were divided into the clean and the dirty ants. The rank of each is indicated by a number, and the Ant Queen is number ONE; her view is the only correct one; she is the receptacle of all wisdom that was important for me to know. She spoke so much and it was all so clever that it sounded to me like nonsense. She declared her ant-hill was the loftiest thing in the world, though close by it grew a tree which was certainly loftier, much loftier; that could not be denied, and therefore it was never mentioned. One evening an ant had lost herself upon the tree; she had crept up the stem—not up to the crown, but higher than any ant had climbed until then, and when she turned and came back home she talked of something she had found in her travels far higher than the ant-hill; but the other ants considered that an insult to the whole community, and consequently she was condemned to wear a muzzle and to continual confinement. But a short time afterward another ant got on the tree and made the same journey and the same discovery; and this one spoke with emphasis and distinctly, as they said; and as, moreover, she was one of the pure ants and very much

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respected, they believed her; and when she died they erected an egg-shell as a memorial of her, for they had a great respect for the sciences. "I saw," continued the little Mouse, "that the ants are always running to and fro with their eggs on their backs. One of them once dropped her egg; she exerted herself greatly to pick it up again, but she could not succeed. Then two others came up and helped her with all their might, insomuch that they nearly dropped their own eggs over it; but then they certainly at once relaxed their exertions, for each should think of himself first—the Ant Queen had declared that by so doing they exhibited at once heart and understanding.

"These two qualities," she said, 'place us ants on the highest step among all reasoning beings. Understanding is seen among us all in predominant measure, and I have the greatest share of understanding.' And so saying she raised herself on her hind legs so that she was easily to be recognized. I could not be mistaken, and I ate her up. We were to go to the ants to learn wisdom—and I had got the Queen!

"I now proceeded nearer to the before-mentioned lofty tree. It was an oak, and had a great trunk and a far-spreading top, and was very old. I knew that a living being dwelt there, a Dryad, as it is called, who is born with the tree and dies with it. I had heard about this in the library; and now I saw an oak-tree and an oak-girl. She uttered a piercing cry when she saw me so near. Like all females, she was very much afraid of mice; and she had more ground for fear than others, for I might have gnawed through the stem of the tree on which her life depended. I accosted the maiden in a friendly and honest way and bade her take courage. And she took me up in her delicate hand; and when I had told her my reason for coming out into the wide world she promised me that perhaps on that very evening I should have one of the two treasures of which I was still in quest. She told me that Phantásus, the genius of imagination, was her very good friend, that he was beautiful as the God of Love, and that he rested many an hour under the leafy boughs of the tree, which then rustled more than ever over

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the pair of them. He called her his dryad, she said, and the tree his tree, for the grand gnarled oak was just to his taste, with its root burrowing so deep in the earth, and the stem and crown rising so high out in the fresh air, and knowing the beating snow, and the sharp wind, and the warm sunshine as they deserve to be known. 'Yes,' the Dryad continued, 'the birds sing aloft there in the branches and tell each other of strange countries they have visited; and on the only dead bough the stork has built a nest which is highly ornamental; and, moreover, one gets to hear something of the land of pyramids. All this is very pleasing to Phantasus; but it is not enough for him: I myself must talk to him and tell him of life in the woods and must revert to my childhood, when I was little and the tree such a delicate thing that a stinging-nettle overshadowed it—and I have to tell everything, till now that the tree is great and strong. Sit you down under the green thyme and pay attention, and when Phantasus comes I shall find an opportunity to pinch his wings and to pull out a little feather. Take the pen—no better is given to any poet—and it will be enough for you!'

"And when Phantasus came the feather was plucked, and I seized it," said the Mouse. "I put it in water and held it there till it grew soft. It was very hard to digest, but I nibbled it up at last. It is very easy to gnaw one's self into being a poet, though there are many things one must do. Now I had these two things, imagination and understanding, and through these I knew that the third was to be found in the library; for a great man has said and written that there are romances whose sole and single use is that they relieve people of their superfluous tears, and that they are, in fact, a sort of sponges sucking up human emotion. I remembered a few of these old books, which had always looked especially palatable, and were much thumbed and very greasy, having evidently absorbed a great deal of feeling into themselves.

"I betook myself back to the library and, so to speak, devoured a whole novel—that is, the essence of it, the interior

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part, for I left the crust, or binding. When I had digested this, and a second one in addition, I felt a stirring within me, and I ate a bit of a third romance, and now I was a poet. I said so to myself, and told the others also. I had headache and chestache, and I can't tell what aches besides. I began thinking what kind of stories could be made to refer to a sausage-stick, and many pegs and sticks and staves and splinters came into my mind—the Ant Queen must have had a particularly fine understanding. I remembered the man who took a white stick in his mouth, by which means he could render himself and the stick invisible; I thought of stick hobby-horses, of 'stock rhymes,' of 'breaking the staff' over an offender, and goodness knows how many phrases more concerning sticks, stocks, staves, and pegs. All my thoughts ran upon sticks, staves, and pegs; and when one is a poet (and I am a poet, for I have worked most terribly hard to become one) a person can make poetry on these subjects. I shall therefore be able to wait upon you every day with a poem or a history—and that's the soup I have to offer."

"Let us hear what the third has to say," was now the Mouse King's command.

"Piep! piep!" cried a small voice at the kitchen door, and a little Mouse—it was the fourth of the Mice who had contended for the prize, the one whom they looked upon as dead—shot in like an arrow. She toppled the sausage-stick with the crape covering over in a moment. She had been running day and night, and had traveled on the railway, in the freight-train, having watched her opportunity, and yet she had almost come too late. She pressed forward, looking very much rumpled, and she had lost her sausage-stick, but not her voice, for she at once took up the word, as if they had been waiting only for her and wanted to hear none but her, and as if everything else in the world were of no consequence. She spoke at once, and spoke fully: she had appeared so suddenly that no one found time to object to her speech or to her while she was speaking. And now let us hear what she said.

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IV

WHAT THE FOURTH MOUSE, WHO SPOKE BEFORE THE THIRD HAD SPOKEN, HAD TO TELL

"I BETOOK myself immediately to the largest town," she said; "the name has escaped me—I have a bad memory for names. From the railway I was carried, with some confiscated goods, to the council-house, and when I arrived there I ran into the dwelling of the Jailer. The Jailer was talking of his prisoners, and especially of one who had spoken unconsidered words. These words had given rise to others, and these latter had been written down and recorded.

"'The whole thing is soup of a sausage-stick,' said the Jailer; 'but the soup may cost him his neck.'

"Now, this gave me an interest in the prisoner," continued the Mouse, "and I watched my opportunity and slipped into his prison—for there's a mouse-hole to be found behind every locked door. The prisoner looked pale, and had a great beard and bright, sparkling eyes. The lamp flickered and smoked, but the walls were so accustomed to that that they grew none the blacker for it. The prisoner scratched pictures and verses in white upon the black ground, but I did not read them. I think he found it tedious, and I was a welcome guest. He lured me with bread-crumbs, with whistling, and with friendly words; he was glad to see me, and gradually I got to trust him, and we became good friends. He let me run upon his hand, his arm, and into his sleeve; he let me creep about on his beard, and called me his little friend. I really got to love him, for these things are reciprocal. I forgot my mission in the wide world, forgot my sausage-stick that I had placed in a crack in the floor—it's lying there still. I wished to stay where I was, for if I went away the poor prisoner would have no one at all, and that's having *too* little in this world. I stayed, but *he* did not stay. He spoke to me very mournfully the last time, gave me twice as much bread and cheese as usual, and kissed his hand to me;

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then he went away and never came back. I don't know his history.

“‘Soup of a sausage-stick!’ said the Jailer, to whom I now went; but I should not have trusted him. He took me in his hand, certainly, but he popped me into a cage, a treadmill. That's a horrible engine, in which you go round and round without getting any farther, and people laugh at you into the bargain.

“The Jailer's granddaughter was a charming little thing, with a mass of curly hair that shone like gold, and such merry eyes, and such a smiling mouth!

“‘You poor little Mouse,’ she said, as she peeped into my ugly cage; and she drew out the iron rod, and forth I jumped to the window-board, and from thence to the roof-spout. Free! free! I thought only of that, and not of the goal of my journey.

“It was dark, and night was coming on. I took up my quarters in an old tower where dwelt a watchman and an Owl. That is a creature like a cat, who has the great failing that she eats mice. But one may be mistaken, and so was I, for this was a very respectable, well-educated old owl; she knew more than the watchman, and as much as I. The young owls are always making a racket, but ‘Go and make soup of a sausage-stick’ were the hardest words she could prevail on herself to utter, she was so fondly attached to her family. Her conduct inspired me with so much confidence that from the crack in which I was crouching I called out ‘Piep!’ to her. This confidence of mine pleased her hugely, and she assured me I should be under her protection, and that no creature should be allowed to do me wrong; she would reserve me for herself, for the winter, when there would be short commons.

“She was in every respect a very clever woman, and explained to me how the watchman could only ‘whoop’ with the horn that hung at his side, adding, ‘He is terribly conceited about it and imagines he's an owl in the tower. Wants to do great things, but is very small—soup of a sausage-stick!’

“I begged the Owl to give me the recipe for this soup, and then she explained the matter to me.

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“‘Soup of a sausage-stick,’ she said, ‘was only a human proverb, and was to be understood thus: Each thinks his own way the best, but the whole signifies nothing.’

“‘Nothing!’ I exclaimed. I was quite struck. Truth is not always agreeable, but truth is above everything; and that's what the old Owl said. I now thought about it, and readily perceived that if I brought what was *above everything* I brought something far beyond soup of a sausage-stick. So I hastened away, that I might get home in time and bring the highest and best that is above everything—namely, *the truth*. The Mice are an enlightened people, and the King is above them all. He is capable of making me Queen for the sake of truth.”

“Your truth is a falsehood,” said the Mouse who had not yet spoken. “I can prepare the soup, and I mean to prepare it.”

V

HOW IT WAS PREPARED

“I DID not travel,” the third Mouse said. “I remained in my country—that's the right thing to do. There's no necessity for traveling; one can get everything as good here. I stayed at home. I've not learned what I know from supernatural beings or gobbled it up or held converse with owls. I have what I know through my own reflections. Will you make haste and put that kettle upon the fire? So! Now water must be poured in—quite full, up to the brim! So! Now more fuel—make up the fire that the water may boil—it must boil over and over! So! I now throw the peg in. Will the King now be pleased to dip his tail in the boiling water and to stir it round with the said tail? The longer the King stirs it the more powerful will the soup become. It costs nothing at all—no further materials are necessary, only stir it round!”

“Cannot any one else do that?” asked the Mouse King.

“No,” replied the Mouse. “The power is contained only in the tail of the Mouse King.”

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And the water boiled and bubbled, and the Mouse King stood beside the kettle—there was almost danger in it—and he put forth his tail as the mice do in the dairy when they skim the cream from a pan of milk, afterward licking their creamy tails; but his tail only penetrated into the hot steam, and then he sprang hastily down from the hearth.

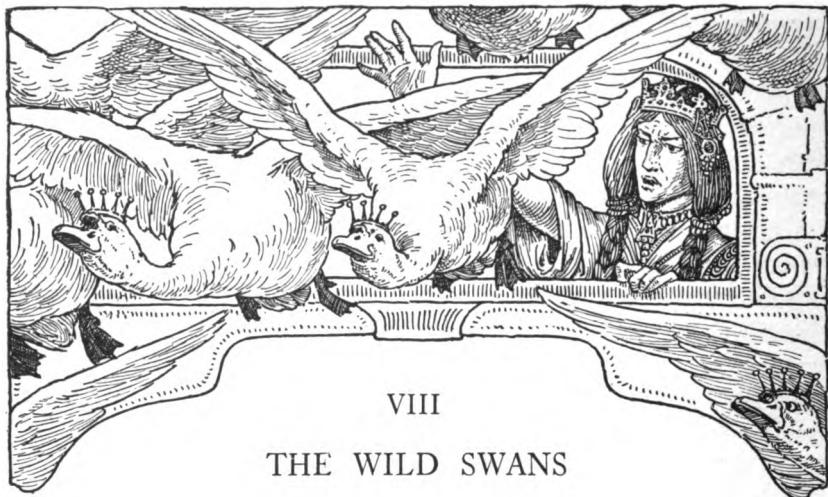
“Of course—certainly you are my Queen,” he said. “We’ll adjourn the question of the soup till our golden wedding in fifty years’ time, so that the poor of my subjects, who will then be fed, may have something to which they can look forward with pleasure for a long time.”

And soon the wedding was held. But many of the Mice said, as they were returning home, that it could not be really called soup of a sausage-stick, but rather soup of a mouse’s tail. They said that some of the stories had been very cleverly told, but the whole thing might have been different. “*I* should have told it so—and so—and so!”

Thus said the critics, who are always wise—after the fact.

And this story went out into the wide world everywhere, and opinions varied concerning it, but the story remained as it was. And that’s the best in great things and in small, so also with regard to soup of a sausage-stick—not to expect any thanks for it.





VIII

THE WILD SWANS

FAR away, where the swallows fly when our winter comes on, lived a King who had eleven sons, and one daughter named Eliza. The eleven brothers were Princes, and each went to school with a star on his breast and his sword by his side. They wrote with pencils of diamond upon slates of gold, and learned by heart just as well as they read; one could see directly that they were Princes. Their sister Eliza sat upon a little stool of plate-glass, and had a picture-book which had been bought for the value of half a kingdom.

Oh, the children were particularly well off; but it was not always to remain so.

Their father, who was king of the whole country, married a bad Queen who did not love the poor children at all. On the very first day they could notice this. In the whole palace there was great feasting, and the children were playing there. Then guests came; but instead of the children receiving, as they had been accustomed to do, all the spare cake and all the roasted apples, they only had some sand given them in a teacup, and were told that they might make believe that was something good.

The next week the Queen took the little sister Eliza into the country to a peasant and his wife; and but a short time had elapsed before she told the King so many falsehoods about the poor Princes that he did not trouble himself any more about them.

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“Fly out into the world and get your own living,” said the wicked Queen. “Fly like great birds without a voice.”

But she could not make it so bad for them as she had intended, for they became eleven magnificent wild swans. With a strange cry they flew out of the palace windows far over the park and into the wood.

It was yet quite early morning when they came by the place where their sister Eliza lay asleep in the peasant’s room. Here they hovered over the roof, turned their long necks and flapped their wings, but no one heard or saw it. They were obliged to fly on, high up toward the clouds, far away into the wide world; there they flew into a great dark wood which stretched away to the seashore.

Poor little Eliza stood in the peasant’s room and played with a green leaf, for she had no other playthings. And she pricked a hole in the leaf and looked through it up at the sun, and it seemed to her that she saw her brothers’ clear eyes; each time the warm sun shone upon her cheeks she thought of all the kisses they had given her.

Each day passed just like the rest. When the wind swept through the great rose-hedges outside the house it seemed to whisper to them, “What can be more beautiful than you?” But the roses shook their heads and answered, “Eliza!” And when the old woman sat in front of her door on Sunday and read in her hymn-book the wind turned the leaves and said to the book, “Who can be more pious than you?” and the hymn-book said, “Eliza!” And what the rose-bushes and the hymn-book said was the simple truth.

When she was fifteen years old she was to go home. And when the Queen saw how beautiful she was she became spiteful and filled with hatred toward her. She would have been glad to change her into a wild swan like her brothers, but she did not dare to do so at once, because the King wished to see his daughter.

Early in the morning the Queen went into the bath, which was built of white marble and decked with soft cushions and the

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most splendid tapestry; and she took three toads and kissed them and said to the first:

"Sit upon Eliza's head when she comes into the bath, that she may become as stupid as you. Seat yourself upon her forehead," she said to the second, "that she may become as ugly as you and her father may not know her. Rest on her heart," she whispered to the third, "that she may receive an evil mind and suffer pain from it."

Then she put the toads into the clear water, which at once assumed a green color, and, calling Eliza, caused her to undress and step into the water. And while Eliza dived one of the toads sat upon her hair, and the second on her forehead, and the third on her heart, but she did not seem to notice it; and as soon as she rose three red poppies were floating on the water. If the creatures had not been poisonous and if the witch had not kissed them, they would have been changed into red roses. But at any rate they became flowers because they had rested on the girl's head and forehead and heart. She was too good and innocent for sorcery to have power over her.

When the wicked Queen saw that, she rubbed Eliza with walnut juice so that the girl became dark brown, and smeared a hurtful ointment on her face, and let her beautiful hair hang in confusion. It was quite impossible to recognize the pretty Eliza.

When her father saw her he was much shocked and declared this was not his daughter. No one but the yard dog and the swallows would recognize her; but they were poor animals who had nothing to say in the matter.

Then poor Eliza wept and thought of her eleven brothers, who were all away. Sorrowfully she crept out of the castle and walked all day over field and moor till she came into the great wood. She did not know whither she wished to go, only she felt very downcast and longed for her brothers; they had certainly been, like herself, thrust forth into the world, and she would seek for them and find them.

She had been only a short time in the wood when the night fell; she quite lost the path, therefore she lay down upon the

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soft moss, prayed her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the stump of a tree. Deep silence reigned around, the air was mild, and in the grass and in the moss gleamed like a green fire hundreds of glowworms; when she lightly touched one of the twigs with her hand the shining insects fell down upon her like shooting-stars.

The whole night long she dreamed of her brothers. They were children again playing together, writing with their diamond pencils upon their golden slates and looking at the beautiful picture-book which had cost half a kingdom. But on the slates they were not writing, as they had been accustomed to do, lines and letters, but the brave deeds they had done and all they had seen and experienced; and in the picture-book everything was alive—the birds sang, and the people went out of the book and spoke with Eliza and her brothers. But when the leaf was turned they jumped back again directly so that there should be no confusion.

When she awoke the sun was already standing high. She could certainly not see it, for the lofty trees spread their branches far and wide above her. But the rays played there above like a gauzy veil, there was a fragrance from the fresh verdure, and the birds almost perched upon her shoulders. She heard the plashing of water; it was from a number of springs all flowing into a lake which had the most delightful sandy bottom. It was surrounded by thick-growing bushes, but at one part the stags had made a large opening, and here Eliza went down to the water. The lake was so clear that if the wind had not stirred the branches and the bushes so that they moved, one would have thought they were painted upon the depths of the lake, so clearly was every leaf mirrored, whether the sun shone upon it or whether it lay in shadow.

When Eliza saw her own face she was terrified, so brown and ugly was she, but when she wetted her little hand and rubbed her eyes and her forehead the white skin gleamed forth again. Then she undressed and went down into the fresh water; a more beautiful king's daughter than she was could not be found in the

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world. And when she had dressed herself again and plaited her long hair she went to the bubbling spring, drank out of the hollow of her hand, and then wandered into the wood, not knowing whither she went. She thought of her dear brothers, and knew that Heaven would certainly not forsake her. It is God who lets the wild apples grow to satisfy the hungry. He showed her a wild apple-tree, with the boughs bending under the weight of the fruit. Here she took her midday meal, placing props under the boughs, and then went into the darkest part of the forest. There it was so still that she could hear her own footsteps as well as the rustling of every dry leaf which bent under her feet. Not one bird was to be seen, not one ray of sunlight could find its way through the great dark boughs of the trees; the lofty trunks stood so close together that when she looked before her it appeared as though she were surrounded by sets of palings one behind the other. Oh, here was a solitude such as she had never before known!

The night came on quite dark. Not a single glowworm now gleamed in the grass. Sorrowfully she lay down to sleep. Then it seemed to her as if the branches of the trees parted above her head and mild eyes of angels looked down upon her from on high.

When the morning came she did not know if it had really been so or if she had dreamed it.

She went a few steps forward, and then she met an old woman with berries in her basket, and the old woman gave her a few of them. Eliza asked the dame if she had not seen eleven Princes riding through the wood.

"No," replied the old woman, "but yesterday I saw eleven swans swimming in the river close by, with golden crowns on their heads."

And she led Eliza a short distance farther to a declivity, and at the foot of the slope a little river wound its way. The trees on its margin stretched their long leafy branches across toward one another, and where their natural growth would not allow them to come together the roots had been torn out of the ground and hung, intermingled with the branches, over the water.

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Eliza said farewell to the old woman and went beside the river to the place where the stream flowed out to the great open ocean.

The whole glorious sea lay before the young girl's eyes, but not one sail appeared upon its surface, and not a boat was to be seen. How was she to proceed? She looked at the innumerable little pebbles on the shore; the water had worn them all round. Glass, iron, stones—everything that was there—had received its shape from the water, which was much softer than even her delicate hand.

"It rolls on unweariedly, and thus what is hard becomes smooth. I will be just as unwearied. Thanks for your lesson, you clear, rolling waves; my heart tells me that one day you will lead me to my dear brothers."

On the foam-covered sea-grass lay eleven white swan feathers, which she collected into a bunch. Drops of water were upon them—whether they were dewdrops or tears nobody could tell. Solitary it was there on the strand, but she did not feel it, for the sea showed continual changes—more in a few hours than the lovely lakes can produce in a whole year. Then a great black cloud came. It seemed as if the sea would say, "I can look angry, too"; and then the wind blew, and the waves turned their white side outward. But when the clouds gleamed red and the winds slept the sea looked like a rose-leaf; sometimes it became green, sometimes white. But, however quietly it might rest, there was still a slight motion on the shore; the water rose gently like the breast of a sleeping child.

When the sun was just about to set Eliza saw eleven wild swans, with crowns on their heads, flying toward the land; they swept along one after the other, so that they looked like a long white band. Then Eliza descended the slope and hid herself behind a bush. The swans alighted near her and flapped their great white wings.

As soon as the sun had disappeared beneath the water the swans' feathers fell off and eleven handsome Princes, Eliza's brothers, stood there. She uttered a loud cry, for, although they

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were greatly altered, she knew and felt that it must be they. And she sprang into their arms and called them by their names; and the Princes felt supremely happy when they saw their little sister again; and they knew her, though she was now tall and beautiful. They smiled and wept; and soon they understood how cruel their stepmother had been to them all.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly about as wild swans as long as the sun is in the sky, but directly it sinks down we receive our human form again. Therefore we must always take care that we have a resting-place for our feet when the sun sets, for if at that moment we were flying up toward the clouds we should sink down into the deep as men. We do not dwell here; there lies a land just as fair as this beyond the sea. But the way thither is long; we must cross the great sea, and on our path there is no island where we could pass the night; only a little rock stands forth in the midst of the waves; it is but just large enough for us to rest upon it close to one another. If the sea is rough the foam spurts far over us, but we thank God for the rock. There we pass the night in our human form; but for this rock we could never visit our beloved native land, for we require two of the longest days in the year for our journey. Only once in each year is it granted to us to visit our home. For eleven days we may stay here and fly over the great wood, whence we can see the palace in which we were born and in which our father lives, and the high church tower beneath whose shade our mother lies buried. Here it seems to us as though the bushes and trees were our relatives; here the wild horses career across the steppe as we have seen them do in our childhood; here the charcoal-burner sings the old songs to which we danced as children; here is our fatherland; hither we feel ourselves drawn; and here we have found you, our dear little sister. Two days more we may stay here; then we must away across the sea to a glorious land, but which is not our native land. How can we bear you away, for we have neither ship nor boat?"

"In what way can I release you?" asked the sister; and they conversed nearly the whole night, only slumbering for a few hours.

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She was awakened by the rustling of the swans' wings above her head. Her brothers were again enchanted, and they flew in wide circles and at last far away; but one of them, the youngest, remained behind, and the swan laid his head in her lap and she stroked his wings; and the whole day they remained together. Toward evening the others came back, and when the sun had gone down they stood there in their own shapes.

"To-morrow we fly far away from here and cannot come back until a whole year has gone by. But we cannot leave you thus! Have you courage to come with us? My arm is strong enough to carry you in the wood; and should not all our wings be strong enough to fly with you over the sea?"

"Yes, take me with you," said Eliza.

The whole night they were occupied in weaving a net of the pliable willow bark and tough reeds; and it was great and strong. On this net Eliza lay down; and when the sun rose and her brothers were changed into wild swans they seized the net with their beaks and flew with their beloved sister, who was still asleep, high up toward the clouds. The sunbeams fell exactly upon her face, so one of the swans flew over her head that his broad wings might overshadow her.

They were far away from the shore when Eliza awoke; she was still dreaming, so strange did it appear to her to be carried high through the air and over the sea. By her side lay a branch with beautiful ripe berries and a bundle of sweet-tasting roots. The youngest of the brothers had collected them and placed them there for her. She smiled at him thankfully, for she recognized him; he it was who flew over her and shaded her with his wings.

They were so high that the greatest ship they descried beneath them seemed like a white sea-gull lying upon the waters. A great cloud stood behind them—it was a perfect mountain, and upon it Eliza saw her own shadow and those of the eleven swans; there they flew on, gigantic in size. Here was a picture, a more splendid one than she had ever yet seen. But as the sun rose higher and the cloud was left farther behind them the floating, shadowy images vanished away.

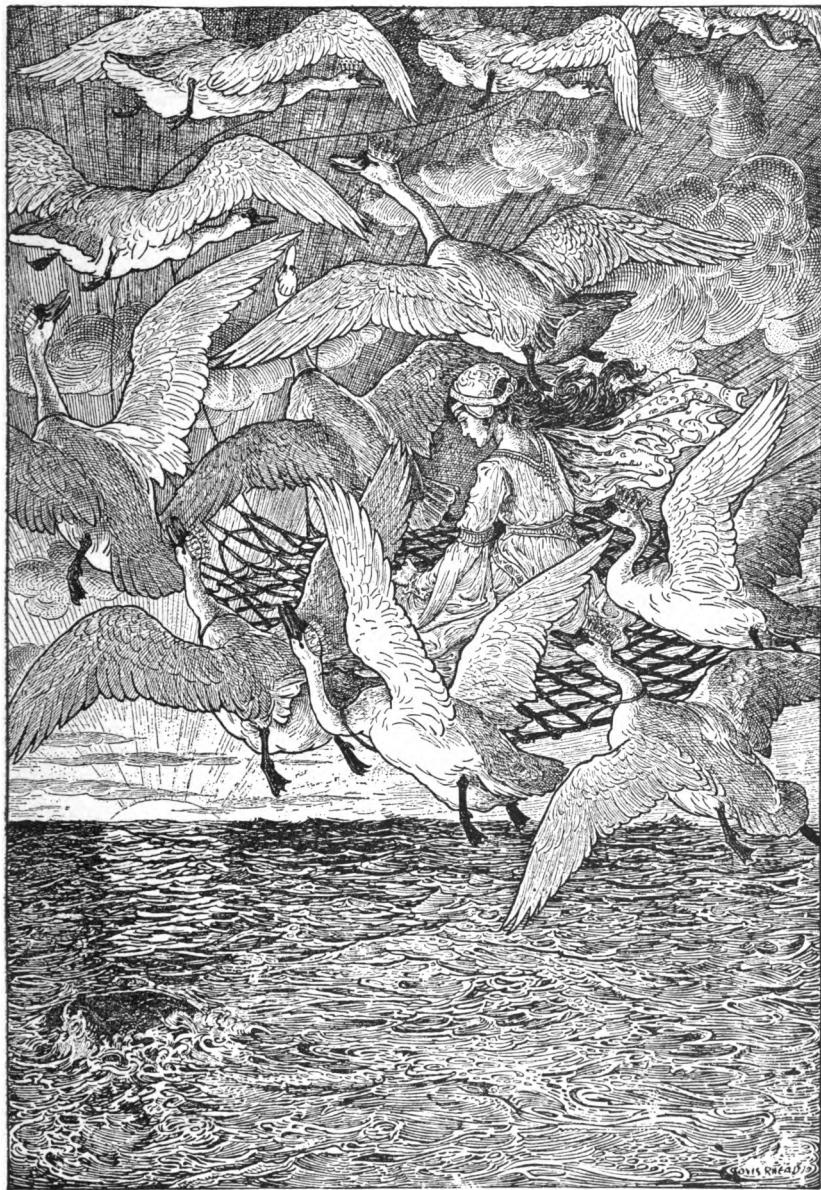
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The whole day they flew onward through the air like a whirring arrow, but their flight was slower than it was wont to be, for they had their sister to carry. Bad weather came on; the evening drew near; Eliza looked anxiously at the setting sun, for the lonely rock in the ocean could not be seen. It seemed to her as if the swans beat the air more strongly with their wings. Alas! she was the cause that they did not advance fast enough. When the sun went down they must become men and fall into the sea and drown. Then she prayed a prayer from the depths of her heart; but still she could descry no rock. The dark clouds came nearer in a great, black, threatening body, rolling forward like a mass of lead, and the lightning burst forth, flash upon flash.

Now the sun just touched the margin of the sea. Eliza's heart trembled. Then the swans darted downward, so swiftly that she thought they were falling, but they paused again. The sun was half hidden below the water. And now for the first time she saw the little rock beneath her, and it looked no larger than a seal might look thrusting his head forth from the water. The sun sank very fast; at last it appeared only like a star; and then her foot touched the firm land. The sun was extinguished like the last spark in a piece of burned paper; her brothers were standing around her, arm in arm, but there was not more than just enough room for her and for them. The sea beat against the rock and went over her like small rain; the sky glowed in continual fire, and peal on peal the thunder rolled; but sister and brothers held one another by the hand and sang psalms, from which they gained comfort and courage.

In the morning twilight the air was pure and calm. As soon as the sun rose the swans flew away with Eliza from the island. The sea still ran high, and when they soared up aloft the white foam looked like millions of white swans swimming upon the water.

When the sun mounted higher Eliza saw before her, half floating in the air, a mountainous country with shining masses of ice on its water, and in the midst of it rose a castle, apparently a mile long, with row above row of elegant columns, while



SHE SAW THE LITTLE ROCK BENEATH HER

FAIRY TALES

beneath waved the palm woods and bright flowers as large as mill-wheels. She asked if this was the country to which they were bound, but the swans shook their heads, for what she beheld was the gorgeous ever-changing palace of Fata Morgana, and into this they might bring no human being. As Eliza gazed at it mountains, woods, and castle fell down, and twenty proud churches, all nearly alike, with high towers and pointed windows, stood before them. She fancied she heard the organs sounding; but it was the sea she heard. When she was quite near the churches they changed to a fleet sailing beneath her, but when she looked down it was only a sea-mist gliding over the ocean. Thus she had a continual change before her eyes, till at last she saw the real land to which they were bound. There arose the most glorious blue mountains with cedar forests, cities, and palaces. Long before the sun went down she sat on the rock in front of a great cave overgrown with delicate green trailing plants looking like embroidered carpets.

“Now we shall see what you will dream of here to-night,” said the youngest brother; and he showed her to her bedchamber.

“Heaven grant that I may dream of a way to release you,” she replied.

And this thought possessed her mightily, and she prayed ardently for help; yes, even in her sleep she continued to pray. Then it seemed to her as if she were flying high in the air to the cloudy palace of Fata Morgana; and the fairy came out to meet her, beautiful and radiant; and yet the fairy was quite like the old woman who had given her the berries in the wood and had told her of the swans with golden crowns on their heads.

“Your brothers can be released,” said she. “But have you courage and perseverance? Certainly water is softer than your delicate hands, and yet it changes the shape of stones; but it feels not the pain that your fingers will feel; it has no heart, and cannot suffer the agony and torment you will have to endure. Do you see the stinging-nettle which I hold in my hand? Many of the same kind grow around the cave in which you sleep; those only and those that grow upon churchyard graves are service-

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able—remember that. Those you must pluck, though they will burn your hands into blisters. Break these nettles to pieces with your feet and you will have flax; of this you must plait and weave eleven shirts of mail with long sleeves; throw these over the eleven swans, and the charm will be broken. But recollect well, from the moment you begin this work until it is finished, even though it should take years to accomplish, you must not speak. The first word you utter will pierce your brother's hearts like a deadly dagger. Their lives hang on your tongue. Remember all this!"

And she touched her hand with the nettle; it was like a burning fire, and Eliza woke with the smart. It was broad daylight, and close by the spot where she had slept lay a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream. She fell upon her knees and prayed gratefully and went forth from the cave to begin her work.

With her delicate hands she groped among the ugly nettles. These stung like fire, burning great blisters on her arms and hands; but she thought she would bear it gladly if she could only release her dear brothers. Then she bruised every nettle with her bare feet and plaited the green flax.

When the sun had set her brothers came, and they were frightened when they found her dumb. They thought it was some new sorcery of their wicked stepmother's; but when they saw her hands they understood what she was doing for their sake, and the youngest brother wept. And where his tears dropped she felt no more pain, and the burning blisters vanished.

She passed the night at her work, for she could not sleep till she had delivered her dear brothers. The whole of the following day, while the swans were away, she sat in solitude, but never had time flown so quickly with her as now. One shirt of mail was already finished, and now she began the second.

Then a hunting-horn sounded among the hills, and she was struck with fear. The noise came nearer and nearer; she heard the barking dogs, and timidly she fled into the cave, bound into a bundle the nettles she had collected and prepared, and sat upon the bundle.

Immediately a great dog came bounding out of the ravine, and



ARM IN ARM STOOD THE BROTHERS AROUND HER

FAIRY TALES

then another and another; they barked loudly, ran back, and then came again. Only a few minutes had passed before all the huntsmen stood before the cave, and the handsomest of them was the king of the country. He came forward to Eliza, for he had never seen a more beautiful maiden.

"How did you come hither, you delightful child?" he asked.

Eliza shook her head, for she might not speak—it would cost her brothers their deliverance and their lives. And she hid her hands under her apron so that the King might not see what she was suffering.

"Come with me," said he. "You cannot stop here. If you are as good as you are beautiful I will dress you in velvet and silk and place the golden crown on your head, and you shall dwell in my richest castle and rule."

And then he lifted her on his horse. She wept and wrung her hands, but the King said:

"I only wish for your happiness; one day you will thank me for this."

And then he galloped away among the mountains with her on his horse, and the hunters galloped at their heels.

When the sun went down the fair, regal city lay before them, with its churches and cupolas; and the King led her into the castle, where great fountains plashed in the lofty marble halls and where walls and ceilings were covered with glorious pictures. But she had no eyes for all this—she only wept and mourned. Passively she let the women put royal robes upon her and weave pearls in her hair and draw dainty gloves over her blistered fingers.

When she stood there in full array she was dazzlingly beautiful, so that the court bowed deeper than ever. And the King chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head and whispered that the beauteous, fresh maid was certainly a witch who blinded the eyes and led astray the heart of the King.

But the King gave no ear to this, but ordered that the music should sound and the costliest dishes should be served and the most beautiful maidens should dance before them. And she was

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led through fragrant gardens into gorgeous halls; but never a smile came upon her lips or shone in her eyes; there she stood, a picture of grief. Then the King opened a little chamber close by, where she was to sleep. This chamber was decked with splendid green tapestry, and completely resembled the cave in which she had been. On the floor lay the bundle of flax which she had prepared from the nettles, and under the ceiling hung the shirt of mail she had completed. All these things one of the huntsmen had brought with him as curiosities.

"Here you may dream yourself back in your former home," said the King. "Here is the work which occupied you there, and now, in the midst of all your splendor, it will amuse you to think of that time."

When Eliza saw this that lay so near her heart a smile played round her mouth and the crimson blood came back into her cheeks. She thought of her brothers' deliverance, and kissed the King's hand; and he pressed her to his heart and caused the marriage feast to be announced by all the church-bells. The beautiful dumb girl out of the wood was to become the queen of the country.

Then the Archbishop whispered evil words into the King's ear, but they did not sink into the King's heart. The marriage would take place; the Archbishop himself was obliged to place the crown on her head, and with wicked spite he pressed the narrow circlet so tightly upon her brow that it pained her. But a heavier ring lay close around her heart—sorrow for her brothers; she did not feel the bodily pain. Her mouth was dumb, for a single word would cost her brothers their lives, but her eyes glowed with love for the kind, handsome King, who did everything to rejoice her. She loved him with her whole heart more and more every day. Oh, that she had been able to confide in him and to tell him of her grief! But she was compelled to be dumb and to finish her work in silence. Therefore at night she crept away from his side and went quietly into the little chamber which was decorated like the cave and wove one shirt of mail after another. But when she began the seventh she had no flax left.



“HOW DID YOU COME HITHER, YOU DELIGHTFUL
CHILD?”

FAIRY TALES

She knew that in the churchyard nettles were growing that she could use, but she must pluck them herself, and how was she to go out there?

“Oh, what is the pain in my fingers to the torment my heart endures?” thought she. “I must venture it, and help will not be denied me!”

With a trembling heart, as though the deed she purposed doing had been evil, she crept into the garden in the moonlight night and went through the lanes and through the deserted streets to the churchyard. There on one of the broadest tombstones she saw sitting a circle of lamias. These hideous wretches took off their ragged garments as if they were going to bathe; then with their skinny fingers they clawed open the fresh graves and with fiendish greed they snatched up the corpses and ate the flesh. Eliza was obliged to pass close by them, and they fastened their evil glances upon her; but she prayed silently and collected the burning nettles and carried them into the castle.

Only one person had seen her, and that was the Archbishop.

He was awake while others slept. Now he felt sure his opinion was correct, that all was not as it should be with the Queen; she was a witch, and thus she had bewitched the King and the whole people.

In secret he told the King what he had seen and what he feared; and when the hard words came from his tongue the pictures of saints in the cathedral shook their heads as though they could have said: “It is not so! Eliza is innocent!” But the Archbishop interpreted this differently—he thought they were bearing witness against her and shaking their heads at her sinfulness. Then two heavy tears rolled down the King’s cheeks; he went home with doubt in his heart, and at night pretended to be asleep, but no quiet sleep came upon his eyes, for he noticed that Eliza got up. Every night she did this, and each time he followed her silently and saw how she disappeared from her chamber.

From day to day his face became darker. Eliza saw it, but did not understand the reason; but it frightened her—and what

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did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers? Her hot tears flowed upon the royal velvet and purple; they lay there like sparkling diamonds, and all who saw the splendor wished they were queens. In the mean time she had almost finished her work. Only one shirt of mail was still to be completed, but she had no flax left and not a single nettle. Once more for the last time, therefore, she must go to the churchyard only to pluck a few handfuls. She thought with terror of this solitary wandering and of the horrible lamias, but her will was firm as her trust in Providence.

Eliza went on, but the King and the Archbishop followed her. They saw her vanish into the churchyard through the wicket-gate; and when they drew near the lamias were sitting upon the tombstone as Eliza had seen them; and the King turned aside, for he fancied her among them whose head had rested against his breast that very evening.

“The people must condemn her,” said he.

And the people condemned her to suffer death by fire.

Out of the gorgeous regal halls she was led into a dark, damp cell, where the wind whistled through the grated window; instead of velvet and silk they gave her the bundle of nettles which she had collected; on this she could lay her head; and the hard, burning coats of mail which she had woven were to be her coverlet. But nothing could have been given her that she liked better. She resumed her work and prayed. Without, the street-boys were singing jeering songs about her, and not a soul comforted her with a kind word.

But toward evening there came the whirring of a swan's wings close by the grating—it was the youngest of her brothers. He had found his sister, and she sobbed aloud with joy, though she knew that the approaching night would probably be the last she had to live. But now the work was almost finished, and her brothers were here.

Now came the Archbishop, to stay with her in her last hour, for he had promised the King to do so. And she shook her head, and with looks and gestures she begged him to depart, for in this

FAIRY TALES

night she must finish her work, or else all would be in vain—all her tears, her pain, and her sleepless nights. The Archbishop withdrew, uttering evil words against her; but poor Eliza knew she was innocent, and continued her work.

It was still twilight; not till an hour afterward would the sun rise. And the eleven brothers stood at the castle gate and demanded to be brought before the King. That could not be, they were told, for it was still almost night; the King was asleep and might not be disturbed. They begged, they threatened, and the sentries came; yes, even the King himself came out and asked what was the meaning of this. At that moment the sun rose and no more were the brothers to be seen, but eleven wild swans flew away over the castle.

All the people came flocking out at the town gate, for they wanted to see the witch burned. An old horse drew the cart on which she sat. They had put upon her a garment of coarse sack-cloth. Her lovely hair hung loose about her beautiful head; her cheeks were as pale as death; and her lips moved silently, while her fingers were engaged with the green flax. Even on the way to death she did not interrupt the work she had begun; the ten shirts of mail lay at her feet, and she wrought at the eleventh. The mob derided her.

“Look at the red witch, how she mutters! She has no hymn-book in her hand; no, there she sits with her ugly sorcery—tear it in a thousand pieces!”

And they all pressed upon her and wanted to tear up the shirts of mail. Then eleven wild swans came flying up and sat round about her on the cart and beat with their wings; and the mob gave way before them, terrified.

“That is a sign from Heaven! She is certainly innocent!” whispered many. But they did not dare to say it aloud.

Now the executioner seized her by the hand; then she hastily threw the eleven shirts over the swans, and immediately eleven handsome Princes stood there. But the youngest had a swan’s wing instead of an arm, for a sleeve was wanting to his shirt—she had not quite finished it.

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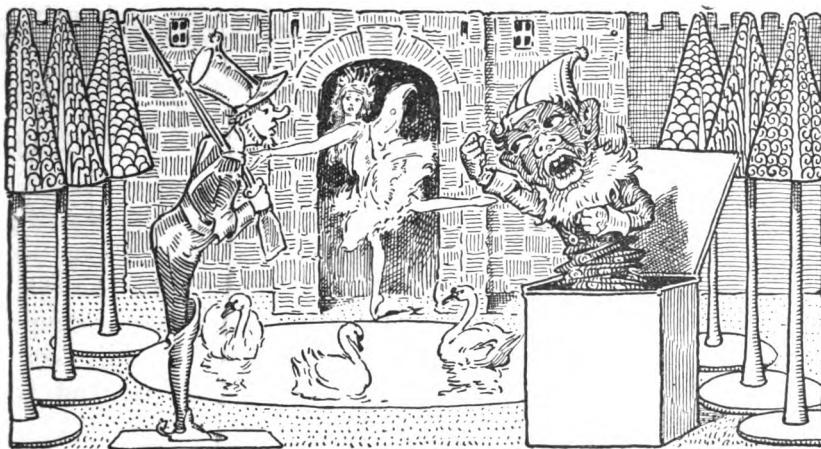
"Now I may speak!" she said. "I am innocent!"

And the people who saw what happened bowed before her as before a saint; but she sank lifeless into her brothers' arms, such an effect had suspense, anguish, and pain had upon her.

"Yes, she is innocent," said the eldest brother.

And now he told everything that had taken place; and while he spoke a fragrance arose as of millions of roses, for every piece of fagot in the pile had taken root and was sending forth shoots; and a fragrant hedge stood there, tall and great, covered with red roses, and at the top a flower, white and shining, gleaming like a star. This flower the King plucked and placed in Eliza's bosom; and she arose with peace and happiness in her heart. And all the church-bells rang of themselves, and the birds came in great flocks. And back to the castle went such a marriage procession as no king had ever seen.





IX

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five-and-twenty tin soldiers; they were all brothers, for they had all been born of one old tin spoon. They shouldered their tin muskets and looked straight before them; their uniform was red and blue, and very splendid. The first thing they had heard in the world, when the lid was taken off their box, had been the words "Tin soldiers!" These words were uttered by a little boy clapping his hands; the soldiers had been given to him, for it was his birthday; and now he put them upon the table. Each soldier was exactly like the rest; but one of them had been cast last of all, and there had not been enough tin to finish him, but he stood as firmly upon his one leg as the others on their two; and it was just this soldier who became remarkable.

On the table on which they had been placed stood many other playthings, but the toy that attracted most attention was a neat castle of cardboard. Through the little windows one could see straight into the hall. Before the castle some little trees were placed round a little looking-glass, which was to

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represent a clear lake. Waxen swans swam on this lake and were mirrored in it. This was all very pretty; but the prettiest of all was a little Lady who stood at the open door of the castle; she was also cut out in paper, but she had a dress of the clearest gauze, and a little narrow blue ribbon over her shoulders that looked like a scarf; and in the middle of this ribbon was a shining tinsel rose as big as her whole face. The little Lady stretched out both her arms, for she was a dancer, and then she lifted one leg so high that the Tin Soldier could not see it at all and thought that, like himself, she had but one leg.

"That would be the wife for me," thought he; "but she is very grand. She lives in a castle, and I have only a box, and there are five-and-twenty of us in that. It is no place for her. But I must try to make acquaintance with her."

And then he lay down at full length behind a snuff-box which was on the table; there he could easily watch the little dainty Lady, who continued to stand on one leg without losing her balance.

When the evening came all the other tin soldiers were put into their box, and the people in the house went to bed. Now the toys began to play at "visiting" and at "war," and "giving balls." The tin soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to join, but could not lift the lid. The Nut-cracker threw somersaults, and the Pencil amused itself on the table; there was so much noise that the Canary woke up and began to speak, too, and even in verse. The only two who did not stir from their places were the Tin Soldier and the Dancing Lady; she stood straight up on the point of one of her toes and stretched out both her arms; and he was just as enduring on his one leg; and he never turned his eyes away from her.

Now the clock struck twelve—and, bounce!—the lid flew off the snuff-box; but there was not snuff in it, but a little black Goblin; you see, it was a trick.

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"Tin Soldier," said the Goblin, "don't stare at things that don't concern you."

But the Tin Soldier pretended not to hear him.

"Just you wait till to-morrow!" said the Goblin.

But when the morning came, and the children got up, the Tin Soldier was placed in the window; and whether it was the Goblin or the draught that did it, all at once the window flew open, and the Soldier fell head over heels out of the third story. That was a terrible passage! He put his leg straight up and struck with his helmet downward, and his bayonet between the paving-stones.

The servant-maid and the little boy came down directly to look for him, but, though they almost trod upon him, they could not see him. If the Soldier had cried out, "Here I am!" they would have found him; but he did not think it fitting to call out loudly, because he was in uniform.

Now it began to rain; the drops soon fell thicker, and at last it came down in a complete stream. When the rain was past two street-boys came by.

"Just look!" said one of them. "There lies a tin soldier. He must come out and ride in the boat."

And they made a boat out of a newspaper and put the Tin Soldier in the middle of it; and so he sailed down the gutter, and the two boys ran beside him and clapped their hands. Goodness preserve us! how the waves rose in that gutter and how fast the stream ran! But then it had been a heavy rain. The paper boat rocked up and down, and sometimes turned round so rapidly that the Tin Soldier trembled; but he remained firm and never changed countenance, and looked straight before him and shoudered his musket.

All at once the boat went into a long drain, and it became as dark as if he had been in his box.

"Where am I going now?" he thought. "Yes, yes; that's the Goblin's fault. Ah! if the little Lady only sat here with me in the boat it might be twice as dark for what I should care."

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Suddenly there came a great Water-rat which lived under the drain.

"Have you a passport?" said the Rat. "Give me your passport."

But the Tin Soldier kept silence and only held his musket tighter than ever.

The boat went on, but the Rat came after it. Hu! how he gnashed his teeth and called out to the bits of straw and wood—

"Hold him! hold him! He hasn't paid toll—he hasn't shown his passport!"

But the stream became stronger and stronger. The Tin Soldier could see the bright daylight where the arch ended; but he heard a roaring noise, which might well frighten a bolder man. Only think—just where the tunnel ended the drain ran into a great canal; and for him that would have been as dangerous as for us to be carried down a great waterfall.

Now he was already so near it that he could not stop. The boat was carried out, the poor Tin Soldier stiffening himself as much as he could, and no one could say that he moved an eyelid. The boat whirled round three or four times and was full of water to the very edge—it must sink. The Tin Soldier stood up to his neck in water, and the boat sank deeper and deeper, and the paper was loosened more and more; and now the water closed over the Soldier's head. Then he thought of the pretty little Dancer, and how he should never see her again; and it sounded in the Soldier's ears:

Farewell, farewell, thou warrior brave;
Die shalt thou this day.

And now the paper parted and the Tin Soldier fell out; but at that moment he was snapped up by a great fish.

Oh, how dark it was in that fish's body! It was darker yet than in the drain-tunnel; and then it was very narrow, too. But

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the Tin Soldier remained unmoved and lay at full length, shouldering his musket.

The fish swam to and fro; he made the most wonderful movements and then became quite still. At last something flashed through him like lightning. The daylight shone quite clear, and a voice said aloud, "The Tin Soldier!" The fish had been caught, carried to market, bought, and taken into the kitchen, where the cook cut him open with a large knife. She seized the Soldier round the body with both her hands and carried him into the room, where all were anxious to see the remarkable man who had traveled about in the inside of a fish; but the Tin Soldier was not at all proud. They placed him on the table, and there —no! What curious things may happen in the world! The Tin Soldier was in the very room in which he had been before! He saw the same children, and the same toys stood upon the table; and there was the pretty castle with the graceful little Dancer. She was still balancing herself on one leg, and held the other extended in the air. She was faithful, too. That moved the Tin Soldier; he was very near weeping tin tears, but that would not have been proper. He looked at her, but they said nothing to each other.

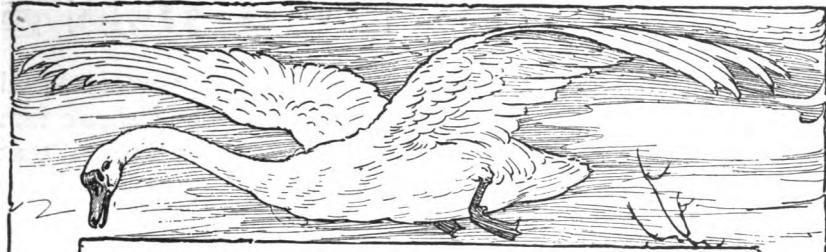
Then one of the little boys took the Tin Soldier and flung him into the stove. He gave no reason for doing this. It must have been the fault of the Goblin in the snuff-box.

The Tin Soldier stood there quite illuminated, and felt a heat that was terrible; but whether this heat proceeded from the real fire or from love he did not know. The colors had quite gone off from him; but whether that had happened on the journey or had been caused by grief no one could say. He looked at the little Lady, she looked at him, and he felt that he was melting; but he stood firm, shouldering his musket. Then suddenly the door flew open, and the draught of air caught the Dancer, and she flew like a sylph just into the stove to the Tin Soldier and flashed up in a flame and then was gone! Then the Tin Soldier melted down into a lump, and when the ser-

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vant-maid took the ashes out next day she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. But of the Dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, and that was burned as black as a coal.





X

SUNSHINE STORIES

NOW I am going to tell a story," said the Wind.

"Excuse me," said the Rain, "but now it is my turn; you have been howling round the corner as hard as ever you could this long time past."

"Is that your gratitude toward me?" said the Wind. "I, who in honor of you turn inside out—yes, even break—all the umbrellas when people won't have anything to do with you."

"I am going to speak!" said the Sunshine. "Silence!" And the Sunshine

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said it with such glory and majesty that the long, weary Wind fell prostrate, and the Rain beat against him and shook him and said: "We won't stand it! She always breaks through, that Madam Sunshine. We won't listen to her. What she says is not worth hearing."

But the Sunshine said: "A beautiful swan flew over the rolling, tumbling waves of the ocean. Every one of its feathers shone like gold; one feather drifted down on the great merchant vessel that, with all sail set, was sailing away. The feather dropped on the curly light hair of a young man whose business it was to have a care for the goods—supercargo they called him. The bird of Fortune's feather touched his forehead, became a pen in his hand, and brought him such luck that very soon he became a wealthy merchant—rich enough to have bought for himself spurs of gold, rich enough to change a golden dish into a nobleman's shield; and I shone on it," said the Sunshine.

"The swan flew farther away over the bright-green meadow, where the little shepherd-boy only seven years old had lain down in the shadow of the old and only tree there was. The swan in its flight kissed one of the leaves of the tree. The leaf fell into the boy's hand, and it was changed to three leaves, to ten—yes, to a whole book—and in it he read about all the wonders of nature, about his native language, about faith and knowledge. At night he laid the book under his head, that he might not forget what he had been reading. The wonderful book led him to the school-bench, and thence in search of knowledge. I have read his name among the names of learned men," said the Sunshine.

"The swan flew into the quiet, lonely forest, rested awhile on the dark, deep lake where the water-lilies grow, where the wild apples are to be found on the shore, where the cuckoo and the wild pigeon have their homes.

"A poor woman was in the wood gathering firewood—branches that had fallen down and dry sticks—she carried them in a bundle on her back, and in her arms she held her little child. She saw the golden swan, the bird of Fortune, rise from among

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the reeds on the shore. What was that that glittered? A golden egg quite warm yet. She laid it in her bosom, and the warmth remained in it. Surely there was life in the egg! She heard a gentle picking inside of the shell, but mistook the sound and thought it was her own heart that she heard beating.

“At home, in the poor cottage, she took out the egg. ‘Tick, tick,’ it said, as if it had been a valuable gold watch; but that it was not, only an egg—a real, living egg. The egg cracked and opened, and a dear little baby swan, all feathered as with purest gold, put out its little head; round its neck it had four rings, and as the poor woman had four boys—three at home and the little one that she had had with her in the lonely wood—she understood at once that here was a ring for each boy; and just as she thought of that the little gold bird took flight. She kissed each ring, made each of the children kiss one of the rings, laid it next to the child’s heart, then put it on his finger. I saw it all,” said the Sunshine, “and I saw what followed.

“One of the boys was playing in a ditch and took a lump of clay in his hand, turned and twisted and pressed it between his fingers till it took shape and was like Jason, who went in search of and found the golden fleece.

“The second boy ran out on the meadow where the flowers stood—flowers of all imaginable colors; he gathered a handful and squeezed them so tight that all the juice spurted into his eyes, and some of it wetted the ring. It cribbled and crawled in his thoughts and in his hands, and after many a day and many a year people in the great city talked of the great painter.

“The third child held the ring so tight in his teeth that it gave forth sound, an echo of the song in the depths of his heart. Thoughts and feelings rose in beautiful sounds; rose like singing swans; plunged like swans into the deep, deep sea. He became a great master, a great composer, of whom every country has the right to say, ‘He was mine!’

“And the fourth little one was—yes, he was—the ‘ugly duck’ of the family; they said he had the pip, and must have pepper and butter like the little sick chickens, and that he got; but of

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me he got a warm, sunny kiss," said the Sunshine. "He got ten kisses for one; he was a poet, and was buffeted and kissed alternately all his life. But he held what no one could take from him—the Ring of Fortune from Dame Fortune's golden swan. His thoughts took wing and flew up and away like singing butterflies—the emblem of immortality!"

"That was a dreadfully long story," said the Wind.

"And, oh, how stupid and tiresome!" said the Rain. "Blow on me, please, that I may revive a little."

And the Wind blew, and the Sunshine said: "The swan of Fortune flew over the beautiful bay where the fishermen had set their nets; the poorest of them wanted to get married, and marry he did. To him the swan brought a piece of amber; amber draws things toward it, and it drew hearts to the house. Amber is the most wonderful incense, and there came a soft perfume, as from a church; there came a sweet breath from out of beautiful nature, that God has made. They were so happy and grateful for their peaceful home, and content even in their poverty. Their life became a real Sunshine story!"

"I think we had better stop now," said the Wind; "the Sunshine has talked long enough and I am dreadfully bored."

"And I also," said the Rain.

And what do we others who have heard the story say?

We say, "Now my story's done."



XI

THE DAISY

NOW you shall hear!

Out in the country, close by the roadside, there was a country house; you yourself have certainly once seen it. Before it is a little garden with flowers, and a paling which is painted. Close by it by the ditch, in the midst of the most beautiful green grass, grew a little Daisy. The sun shone as warmly and as brightly upon it as on the great splendid garden flowers, and so it grew from hour to hour. One morning it stood in full bloom, with its little shining white leaves spreading like rays round the little yellow sun in the center. It never thought that no man would notice it down in the grass, and that it was a poor despised floweret; no, it was very merry, and turned to the warm sun, looked up at it, and listened to the Lark caroling high in the air.

The little Daisy was as happy as if it were a great holiday, and yet it was only a Monday. All the children were at school, and while they sat on their benches learning it sat on its little green stalk and learned also from the warm sun and from all around how good God is. And the Daisy was very glad that everything that it silently felt was sung so loudly and charmingly by the Lark. And the Daisy looked up with a kind of respect to

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the happy bird who could sing and fly, but it was not at all sorrowful because it could not fly and sing also.

"I can see and hear," it thought; "the sun shines on me, and the forest kisses me. Oh, how richly have I been gifted!"

Within the palings stood many stiff, aristocratic flowers—the less scent they had the more they flaunted. The peonies blew themselves out to be greater than the roses, but size will not do it; the tulips had the most splendid colors, and they knew that and held themselves bolt upright that they might be seen more plainly. They did not notice the little Daisy outside there, but the Daisy looked at them the more, and thought: "How rich and beautiful they are! Yes, the pretty bird flies across to them and visits them. I am glad that I stand so near them, for at any rate I can enjoy the sight of their splendor!" And just as she thought that—"keevit!"—down came flying the Lark, but not down to the peonies and tulips—no, down into the grass to the lowly Daisy, which started so with joy that it did not know what to think.

The little bird danced round about it and sang:

"Oh, how soft the grass is! And see what a lovely little flower with gold in its heart and silver on its dress!"

For the yellow point in the Daisy looked like gold, and the little leaves around it shone silvery white.

How happy was the little Daisy—no one can conceive how happy! The bird kissed it with his beak, sang to it, and then flew up again into the blue air. A quarter of an hour passed, at least, before the Daisy could recover itself. Half ashamed, yet inwardly rejoiced, it looked at the other flowers in the garden, for they had seen the honor and happiness it had gained, and must understand what a joy it was. But the tulips stood up twice as stiff as before, and they looked quite peaky in the face and quite red, for they had been vexed. The peonies were quite wrong-headed: it was well they could not speak, or the Daisy would have received a good scolding. The poor little flower could see very well that they were not in a good humor, and that hurt it sensibly. At this moment there came into the

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garden a girl with a great sharp, shining knife; she went straight up to the tulips and cut off one after another of them.

"Oh," sighed the little Daisy, "that is dreadful! Now it is all over with them."

Then the girl went away with the tulips. The Daisy was glad to stand out in the grass and to be only a poor little flower; it felt very grateful; and when the sun went down it folded its leaves and went to sleep and dreamed all night long about the sun and the pretty little bird.

The next morning, when the flower again happily stretched out all its white leaves, like little arms, toward the air and the light, it recognized the voice of the bird, but the song he was singing sounded mournfully. Yes, the poor Lark had good reason to be sad: he was caught, and now sat in a cage close by the open window. He sang of free and happy roaming, sang of the young green corn in the fields and of the glorious journey he might make on his wings high through the air. The poor Lark was not in good spirits, for there he sat a prisoner in a cage.

The little Daisy wished very much to help him. But what was it to do? Yes, that was difficult to make out. It quite forgot how everything was so beautiful around, how warm the sun shone, and how splendidly white its own leaves were. Ah! it could think only of the imprisoned bird, and how it was powerless to do anything for him.

Just then two little boys came out of the garden. One of them carried in his hand the knife which the girl had used to cut off the tulips. They went straight up to the little Daisy, which could not at all make out what they wanted.

"Here we may cut a capital piece of turf for the Lark," said one of the boys; and he began to cut off a square patch round about the Daisy, so that the flower remained standing in its piece of grass.

"Tear off the flower!" said the other boy.

And the Daisy trembled with fear, for to be torn off would be to lose its life; and now it wanted particularly to live, as it was to be given with the piece of turf to the captive Lark.

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"No, let it stay," said the other boy; "it makes such a nice ornament."

And so it remained, and was put into the Lark's cage. But the poor bird complained aloud of his lost liberty and beat his wings against the wires of his prison; and the little Daisy could not speak—could say no consoling word to him, gladly as it would have done so. And thus the whole morning passed.

"Here is no water," said the captive Lark. "They are all gone out and have forgotten to give me anything to drink. My throat is dry and burning. It is like fire and ice within me, and the air is so close. Oh, I must die! I must leave the warm sunshine, the fresh green, and all the splendor that God has created!"

And then he thrust his beak into the cool turf to refresh himself a little with it. Then the bird's eye fell upon the Daisy, and he nodded to it and kissed it with his beak, and said:

"You also must wither in here, poor little flower. They have given you to me with the little patch of green grass on which you grow, instead of the whole world which was mine out there! Every little blade of grass shall be a great tree for me, and every one of your fragrant leaves a great flower. Ah, you only tell me how much I have lost!"

"If I could only comfort him!" thought the Daisy.

It could not stir a leaf, but the scent which streamed forth from its delicate leaves was far stronger than is generally found in these flowers; the bird also noticed that, and, though he was fainting with thirst and in his pain plucked up the green blades of grass, he did not touch the flower.

The evening came on, and yet nobody appeared to bring the poor bird a drop of water. Then he stretched out his pretty wings and beat the air frantically with them; his song changed to a mournful piping, his little head sank down toward the flower, and the bird's heart broke with want and yearning. Then the flower could not fold its leaves, as it had done on the previous evening, and sleep; it drooped, sorrowful and sick, toward the earth.

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Not till the next morn did the boys come; and when they found the bird dead they wept, wept many tears, and dug him a neat grave, which they adorned with leaves of flowers. The bird's corpse was put into a pretty red box, for he was to be royally buried—the poor bird! While he was alive and sang they forgot him and let him sit in his cage and suffer want, but now that he was dead he had adornment and many tears.

But the patch of turf with the Daisy on it was thrown out into the highroad; no one thought of the flower that had felt the most for the little bird and would have been so glad to console him.



XII

THE SNOW MAN

“IT is so wonderfully cold that my whole body crackles!” said the Snow Man. “This is a kind of wind that can blow life into one; and how the gleaming one up yonder is staring at me.” That was the sun he meant, which was just about to set. “It shall not make *me* wink—I shall manage to keep the pieces.”

He had two triangular pieces of tile in his head instead of eyes. His mouth was made of an old rake, and consequently was furnished with teeth.

He had been born amid the joyous shouts of the boys, and welcomed by the sound of sledge-bells and the slashing of whips.

The sun went down and the full moon rose, round, large, clear, and beautiful in the blue air.

“There it comes again from the other side,” said the Snow Man. He intended to say the sun is showing himself again. “Ah! I have cured him of staring. Now let him hang up there and shine that I may see myself. If I only knew how I could manage to move from this place I should like so much to move. If I could I would slide along yonder on the ice, just as I see the boys slide; but I don’t understand it; I don’t know how to run.”

“Away! away!” barked the old Yard Dog. He was quite hoarse and could not pronounce the genuine “Bow, bow.” He had got the hoarseness from the time when he was an indoor dog and lay by the fire. “The sun will teach you to run! I saw

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that last winter in your predecessor, and before that in *his* predecessor. Away! away! and away they all go."

"I don't understand you, comrade," said the Snow Man. "That thing up yonder is to teach me to run?" He meant the moon. "Yes, it was running itself when I saw it a little while ago, and now it comes creeping from the other side."

"You know nothing at all," retorted the Yard Dog. "But then you've only just been patched up. What you see yonder is the moon, and the one that went before was the sun. It will come again to-morrow and will teach you to run down into the ditch by the wall. We shall soon have a change of weather; I can feel that in my left hind leg, for it pricks and pains me—the weather is going to change."

"I don't understand him," said the Snow Man; "but I have a feeling that he's talking about something disagreeable. The one who stared so just now, and whom he called the sun, is not my friend. I can feel that."

"Away! away!" barked the Yard Dog; and he turned round three times and then crept into his kennel to sleep.

The weather really changed. Toward morning a thick, damp fog lay over the whole region; later there came a wind, an icy wind. The cold seemed quite to seize upon one; but when the sun rose what splendor! Trees and bushes were covered with hoar-frost and looked like a complete forest of coral, and every twig seemed covered with gleaming white buds. The many delicate ramifications, concealed in summer by the wreath of leaves, now made their appearance; it seemed like a lace-work gleaming white. A snowy radiance sprang from every twig. The birch waved in the wind—it had life like the rest of the trees in summer. It was wonderfully beautiful. And when the sun shone, how it all gleamed and sparkled, as if diamond dust had been strewn everywhere and big diamonds had been dropped on the snowy carpet of the earth! Or one could imagine that countless little lights were gleaming whiter than even the snow itself.

"That is wonderfully beautiful," said a young girl who came

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with a young man into the garden. They both stood still near the Snow Man and contemplated the glittering trees. "Summer cannot show a more beautiful sight," said she; and her eyes sparkled.

"And we can't have such a fellow as this in summer-time," replied the young man, and he pointed to the Snow Man. "He is capital."

The girl laughed, nodded to the Snow Man, and then danced away over the snow with her friend—over the snow that cracked and crackled under her tread as if she were walking on starch.

"Who were those two?" the Snow Man inquired of the Yard Dog. "You've been longer in the yard than I. Do you know them?"

"Of course I know them," replied the Yard Dog. "She has stroked me, and he has thrown me a meat-bone. I don't bite those two."

"But what are they?" asked the Snow Man.

"Lovers!" replied the Yard Dog. "They will go to live in the same kennel and gnaw at the same bone. Away! away!"

"Are they the same kind of beings as you and I?" asked the Snow Man.

"Why, they belong to the master!" retorted the Yard Dog. "People certainly know very little who were only born yesterday. I can see that in you. I have age and information. I know every one here in the house, and I know a time when I did not lie out here in the cold fastened to a chain. Away! away!"

"The cold is charming," said the Snow Man. "Tell me, tell me. But you must not clank your chain, for it jars within me when you do that."

"Away! away!" barked the Yard Dog. "They told me I was a pretty little fellow; then I used to lie in a chair covered with velvet up in master's house, and sit in the lap of the mistress of all. They used to kiss my nose and wipe my paws with an embroidered handkerchief. I was called 'Ami—dear Ami—sweet Ami.' But afterward I grew too big for them, and they

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gave me away to the housekeeper. So I came to live in the basement story. You can look into that from where you are standing, and you can see into the room where I was master; for I was master at the housekeeper's. It was certainly a smaller place than up-stairs, but I was more comfortable, and was not continually taken hold of and pulled about by children as I had been. I received just as much good food as ever, and even better. I had my own cushion, and there was a stove, the finest thing in the world at this season. I went under the stove, and could lie down quite beneath it. Ah! I still sometimes dream of that stove. Away! away!"

"Does a stove look so beautiful?" asked the Snow Man. "Is it at all like me?"

"It's just the reverse of you. It's as black as a crow, and has a long neck and a brazen drum. It eats firewood so that the fire spurts out of its mouth. One must keep at its side or under it, and there one is very comfortable. You can see it through the window from where you stand."

And the Snow Man looked and saw a bright, polished thing with a brazen drum, and the fire gleamed from the lower part of it. The Snow Man felt quite strangely; an odd emotion came over him; he knew not what it meant and could not account for it; but all people who are not snow men know the feeling.

"And why did you leave her?" asked the Snow Man, for it seemed to him that the stove must be of the female sex. "How could you quit such a comfortable place?"

"I was obliged," replied the Yard Dog. "They turned me out of doors and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest young master in the leg because he kicked away the bone I was gnawing. 'Bone for bone,' I thought. They took that very much amiss, and from that time I have been fastened to a chain and have lost my voice. Don't you hear how hoarse I am? Away! away! I can't talk any more like other dogs. Away! away! That was the end of the affair."

But the Snow Man was no longer listening to him. He was

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looking in at the housekeeper's basement lodging, into the room where the stove stood on its four iron legs, just the same size as the Snow Man himself.

"What a strange crackling within me!" he said. "Shall I ever get in there? It is an innocent wish, and our innocent wishes are certain to be fulfilled. I must go in there and lean against her, even if I have to break through the window."

"You'll never get in there," said the Yard Dog; "and if you approach the stove you'll melt away—away!"

"I am as good as gone," replied the Snow Man. "I think I am breaking up."

The whole day the Snow Man stood looking in through the window. In the twilight hour the room became still more inviting; from the stove came a mild gleam, not like the sun nor like the moon; no, it was only as the stove can glow when he has something to eat. When the room door opened the flame started out of his mouth; this was a habit the stove had. The flame fell distinctly on the white face of the Snow Man and gleamed red upon his bosom.

"I can endure it no longer," said he. "How beautiful it looks when it stretches out its tongue!"

The night was long; but it did not appear long to the Snow Man, who stood there lost in his own charming reflections, crackling with the cold.

In the morning the window-panes of the basement lodging were covered with ice. They bore the most beautiful ice flowers that any snow man could desire; but they concealed the stove. The window-panes would not thaw; he could not see the stove, which he pictured to himself as a lovely female. It crackled and whistled in him and around him; it was just the kind of frosty weather a snow man must thoroughly enjoy.

But he did not enjoy it; and, indeed, how could he enjoy himself when he was stove-sick?

"That's a terrible disease for a Snow Man," said the Yard Dog. "I have suffered from it myself, but I got over it. Away! away!" he barked; and he added, "The weather is going to change."

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And the weather did change; it began to thaw. The warmth increased, and the Snow Man decreased. He made no complaint—and that's an infallible sign.

One morning he broke down. And, behold, where he had stood something like a broomstick remained sticking up out of the ground. It was the pole around which the boys had built him up.

“Ah! now I can understand why he had such an intense longing,” said the Yard Dog. “Why, there’s a shovel for cleaning out the stove fastened to the pole. The Snow Man had a stove-rake in his body, and that’s what moved within him. Now he has got over that, too. Away! away!”

And soon they had got over the winter.

“Away! away!” barked the hoarse Yard Dog; but the girls in the house sang:

“Green thyme, from your house come out;
Willow, your woolly fingers stretch out;
Lark and cuckoo, cheerfully sing,
For in February is coming the spring;
And with the cuckoo I’ll sing, too.
Come thou, dear sun, come out, cuckoo!”

And nobody thought any more of the Snow Man.





XIII

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN China, you must know, the Emperor is a Chinaman, and all whom he has about him are Chinamen, too. It happened a good many years ago, but that's just why it's worth while to hear the story before it is forgotten. The Emperor's palace was the most splendid in the world; it was made entirely of porcelain, very costly, but so delicate and brittle that one had to take care how one touched it. In the garden were to be seen the most wonderful flowers, and to the costliest of them silver bells were tied, which sounded so that nobody should pass by without noticing the flowers. Yes, everything in the Emperor's garden was admirably arranged. And it extended so far that the gardener himself did not know where the end was. If a man went on and on he came into a glorious forest with high trees and deep lakes. The wood extended straight down to the sea, which was blue and deep; great ships could sail to and fro beneath the branches of the trees; and in the trees lived a Nightingale, which sang so splendidly that even the poor Fisherman, who had many other things to do, stopped still and listened when he had gone out at night to throw out his nets and heard the Nightingale.

"How beautiful that is!" he said; but he was obliged to attend to his property, and thus forgot the bird. But when on the next night the bird sang again, and the Fisherman heard it, he exclaimed again, "How beautiful that is!"

From all the countries of the world travelers came to the city of the Emperor and admired it and the palace and the garden,

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but when they heard the Nightingale they said, "That is the best of all!"

And the travelers told of it when they came home; and the learned men wrote many books about the town, the palace, and the garden. But they did not forget the Nightingale; that was placed highest of all; and those who were poets wrote most magnificent poems about the Nightingale in the wood by the deep lake.

The books went through all the world, and a few of them once came to the Emperor. He sat in his golden chair and read and read; every moment he nodded his head, for it pleased him to peruse the masterly descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden. "But the Nightingale is the best of all!"—it stood written there.

"What's that?" exclaimed the Emperor. "I don't know the Nightingale at all! Is there such a bird in my empire, and even in my garden? I've never heard of that. To think that I should have to learn such a thing for the first time from books!"

And thereupon he called his Cavalier. This Cavalier was so grand that if any one lower in rank than himself dared to speak to him or to ask him any question he answered nothing but "P!"—and that meant nothing.

"There is said to be a wonderful bird here called a Nightingale!" said the Emperor. "They say it is the best thing in all my great empire. Why have I never heard anything about it?"

"I have never heard him named," replied the Cavalier. "He has never been introduced at court."

"I command that he shall appear this evening and sing before me," said the Emperor. "All the world knows what I possess, and I do not know it myself!"

"I have never heard him mentioned," said the Cavalier. "I will seek for him. I will find him."

But where was he to be found? The Cavalier ran up and down all the staircases, through halls and passages, but no one among all those whom he met had heard talk of the Nightin-

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gale. And the Cavalier ran back to the Emperor and said that it must be a fable invented by the writers of books.

"Your Imperial Majesty cannot believe how much is written that is fiction besides something that they call the black art."

"But the book in which I read this," said the Emperor, "was sent to me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be a falsehood. I will hear the Nightingale! It must be here this evening! It has my imperial favor; and if it does not come all the court shall be trampled upon after the court has supped!"

"Tsing-pe!" said the Cavalier; and again he ran up and down all the staircases, and through all the halls and corridors; and half the court ran with him, for the courtiers did not like being trampled upon.

Then there was a great inquiry after the wonderful Nightingale, which all the world knew excepting the people at court.

At last they met with a poor little girl in the kitchen who said:

"The Nightingale? I know it well; yes, it can sing gloriously. Every evening I get leave to carry my poor sick mother the scraps from the table. She lives down by the strand, and when I get back and am tired, and rest in the wood, then I hear the Nightingale sing. And then the water comes into my eyes, and it is just as if my mother kissed me!"

"Little Kitchen-girl," said the Cavalier, "I will get you a place in the kitchen, with permission to see the Emperor dine, if you will lead us to the Nightingale, for it is announced for this evening."

So they all went out into the wood where the Nightingale was accustomed to sing; half the court went forth. When they were in the midst of their journey a cow began to low.

"Oh!" cried the court pages, "now we have it! That shows a wonderful power in so small a creature! I have certainly heard it before."

"No, those are cows lowing!" said the little Kitchen-girl. "We are a long way from the place yet."

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Now the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Glorious!" said the Chinese Court Preacher. "Now I hear it—it sounds just like little church-bells."

"No, those are frogs!" said the little Kitchen-maid. "But now I think we shall soon hear it."

And then the Nightingale began to sing.

"That is it!" exclaimed the little Girl. "Listen, listen! And yonder it sits." And she pointed to a little gray bird up in the boughs.

"Is it possible?" cried the Cavalier. "I should never have thought it looked like that! How simple it looks! It must certainly have lost its color at seeing such grand people around."

"Little Nightingale!" called the little Kitchen-maid, quite loudly, "our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing before him."

"With the greatest pleasure!" replied the Nightingale, and began to sing most delightfully.

"It sounds just like glass bells!" said the Cavalier. "And look at its little throat, how it's working! It's wonderful that we should never have heard it before. That bird will be a great success at court."

"Shall I sing once more before the Emperor?" asked the Nightingale, for it thought the Emperor was present.

"My excellent little Nightingale," said the Cavalier, "I have great pleasure in inviting you to a court festival this evening, when you shall charm his Imperial Majesty with your beautiful singing."

"My song sounds best in the greenwood," replied the Nightingale; still it came willingly when it heard what the Emperor wished.

The palace was festively adorned. The walls and the flooring, which were of porcelain, gleamed in the rays of thousands of golden lamps. The most glorious flowers which could ring clearly had been placed in the passages. There was a running to and fro and a thorough draught, and all the bells rang so loudly that one could not hear oneself speak.

In the midst of the great hall, where the Emperor sat, a golden

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perch had been placed, on which the Nightingale was to sit. The whole court was there, and the little Cook-maid had got leave to stand behind the door, as she had now received the title of a real court cook. All were in full dress, and all looked at the little gray bird, to which the Emperor nodded.

And the Nightingale sang so gloriously that the tears came into the Emperor's eyes and the tears ran down over his cheeks; and then the Nightingale sang still more sweetly, that went straight to the heart. The Emperor was so much pleased that he said the Nightingale should have his golden slipper to wear round its neck. But the Nightingale declined this with thanks, saying it had already received a sufficient reward.

"I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes—that is the real treasure to me. An emperor's tears have a peculiar power. I am rewarded enough!" And then it sang again with a sweet, glorious voice.

"That's the most amiable coquetry I ever saw!" said the ladies who stood round about, and then they took water in their mouths to gurgle when any one spoke to them. They thought they should be nightingales too. And the lackeys and chambermaids reported that they were satisfied, too; and that was saying a good deal, for they are the most difficult to please. In short, the Nightingale achieved a real success.

It was now to remain at court, to have its own cage, with liberty to go out twice every day and once at night. Twelve servants were appointed when the Nightingale went out, each of whom had a silken string fastened to the bird's leg, which they held very tight. There was really no pleasure in an excursion of that kind.

The whole city spoke of the wonderful bird; and when two people met, one said nothing but "Nightingale," and the other said "gale"; and then they sighed and understood each other. Eleven peddlers' children were named after the bird; but not one of them could sing a note.

One day the Emperor received a large parcel on which was written, "The Nightingale."

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“There we have a new book about this celebrated bird,” said the Emperor.

But it was not a book, but a little work of art contained in a box, an artificial nightingale, which was to sing like a natural one and was brilliantly ornamented with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. So soon as the artificial bird was wound up he could sing one of the pieces that he really sang, and then his tail moved up and down and shone with silver and gold. Round his neck hung a little ribbon, and on that was written, “The Emperor of China’s Nightingale is poor compared with that of the Emperor of Japan.”

“That is capital!” said they all; and he who had brought the artificial bird immediately received the title, Imperial - Head Nightingale-bringer.

“Now they must sing together. What a duet that will be!”

And so they had to sing together; but it did not sound very well, for the real Nightingale sang in its own way, and the artificial bird sang waltzes.

“That’s not his fault,” said the Play-master; “he’s quite perfect, and very much in my style.”

Now the artificial bird was to sing alone. He had just as much success as the real one, and then it was much handsomer to look at—it shone like bracelets and breastpins.

Three-and-thirty times over did it sing the same piece, and yet was not tired. The people would gladly have heard it again, but the Emperor said that the living Nightingale ought to sing something now. But where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown away out of the open window back to the greenwood.

“But what is become of that?” said the Emperor.

And all the courtiers abused the Nightingale and declared that it was a very ungrateful creature.

“We have the best bird, after all,” said they.

And so the artificial bird had to sing again, and that was the thirty-fourth time that they listened to the same piece. For all that they did not know it quite by heart, for it was so

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very difficult. And the Play-master praised the bird particularly; yes, he declared that it was better than a nightingale, not only with regard to its plumage and the many beautiful diamonds, but inside as well.

"For you see, ladies and gentlemen and, above all, your Imperial Majesty, with a real nightingale one can never calculate what is coming, but in this artificial bird everything is settled. One can explain it; one can open it and make people understand where the waltzes come from, how they go, and how one follows up another."

"Those are quite our own ideas," they all said.

And the speaker received permission to show the bird to the people on the next Sunday. The people were to hear it sing too, the Emperor commanded; and they did hear it, and were as much pleased as if they had all got tipsy upon tea, for that's quite the Chinese fashion; and they all said, "Oh!" and held up their forefingers and nodded. But the poor Fisherman, who had heard the real Nightingale, said:

"It sounds pretty enough, and the melodies resemble each other; but there's something wanting, though I know not what!"

The real Nightingale was banished from the country and empire. The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion close to the Emperor's bed; all the presents it had received, gold and precious stones, were ranged about it; in title it had advanced to be the High Imperial After-dinner Singer, and in rank to number one on the left hand; for the Emperor considered that side the most important on which the heart is placed, and even in an emperor the heart is on the left side; and the Play-master wrote a work of five-and-twenty volumes about the artificial bird; it was very learned and very long, full of the most difficult Chinese words; but yet all the people declared that they had read it and understood it for fear of being considered stupid and having their bodies trampled on.

So a whole year went by. The Emperor, the court, and all the other Chinese knew every little twitter in the artificial bird's

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song by heart. But just for that reason it pleased them best—they could sing with it themselves, and they did so. The street-boys sang, “Tsi-tsi-tsi-glug-glug!” and the Emperor himself sang it, too. Yes, that was certainly famous.

But one evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best and the Emperor lay in bed listening to it, something inside the bird said, “Whizz!” Something cracked. “Whir-r-r!” All the wheels ran round, and then the music stopped.

The Emperor immediately sprang out of bed and caused his body physician to be called; but what could *he* do? Then they sent for a Watchmaker, and after a good deal of talking and investigation the bird was put into something like order; but the Watchmaker said that the bird must be carefully treated, for the barrels were worn, and it would be impossible to put new ones in in such a manner that the music would go. There was a great lamentation; only once in a year was it permitted to let the bird sing, and that was almost too much. But then the Play-master made a little speech full of heavy words, and said this was just as good as before—and so, of course, it was as good as before.

Now five years had gone by and a real grief came upon the whole nation. The Chinese were really fond of their Emperor, and now he was ill and could not, it was said, live much longer. Already a new Emperor had been chosen, and the people stood out in the street and asked the Cavalier how their old Emperor did.

“P!” said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his great gorgeous bed; the whole court thought him dead, and each one ran to pay homage to the new ruler. The chamberlains ran out to talk it over, and the ladies'-maids had a great coffee party. All about, in all the halls and passages, cloth had been laid down so that no footstep could be heard, and therefore it was quiet there, quite quiet. But the Emperor was not dead yet; stiff and pale he lay on the gorgeous bed with the long velvet curtains and the heavy gold tassels; high up a window stood open, and the moon shone in upon the Emperor and the artificial bird.

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The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe; it was just as if something lay upon his chest; he opened his eyes, and then he saw that it was Death who sat upon his chest, and had put on his golden crown and held in one hand the Emperor's sword and in the other his beautiful banner. And all around from among the folds of the splendid velvet curtains strange heads peered forth; a few very ugly, the rest quite lovely and mild. These were all the Emperor's bad and good deeds that stood before him now that Death sat upon his heart.

"Do you remember this?" whispered one to the other. "Do you remember that?" and then they told him so much that the perspiration ran from his forehead.

"I did not know that!" said the Emperor. "Music! music! the great Chinese drum," he cried, "so that I need not hear all they say!"

And they continued speaking, and Death nodded like a Chinaman to all they said.

"Music! music!" cried the Emperor. "You little precious golden bird, sing, sing! I have given you gold and costly presents; I have even hung my golden slipper around your neck—sing now, sing!"

But the bird stood still; no one was there to wind him up, and he could not sing without that; but Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes, and it was quiet, fearfully quiet.

Then there sounded from the window, suddenly, the most lovely song. It was the little live Nightingale that sat outside on a spray. It had heard of the Emperor's sad plight and had come to sing to him of comfort and hope. And as it sang the specters grew paler and paler; the blood ran quickly and more quickly through the Emperor's weak limbs; and even Death listened and said:

"Go on, little Nightingale, go on!"

"But will you give me that splendid golden sword? Will you give me that rich banner? Will you give me the Emperor's crown?"



DEATH SAT UPON THE EMPEROR'S CHEST

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And Death gave up each of these treasures for a song. And the Nightingale sang on and on; and it sang of the quiet church-yard where the white roses grow, where the elder-blossoms smell sweet, and where the fresh grass is moistened by the tears of survivors. Then Death felt a longing to see his garden, and floated out at the window in the form of a cold, white mist.

“Thanks! thanks!” said the Emperor. “You heavenly little bird! I know you well. I banished you from my country and empire, and yet you have charmed away the evil faces from my couch and banished Death from my heart! How can I reward you?”

“You have rewarded me!” replied the Nightingale. “I drew tears from your eyes when I sang the first time—I shall never forget that. Those are the jewels that rejoice a singer’s heart. But now sleep and grow fresh and strong again. I will sing you something.”

And it sang, and the Emperor fell into a sweet slumber. Ah! how mild and refreshing that sleep was! The sun shone upon him through the windows when he awoke refreshed and restored; not one of his servants had yet returned, for they all thought he was dead; only the Nightingale still sat beside him and sang.

“You must always stay with me,” said the Emperor. “You shall sing as you please; and I’ll break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces.”

“Not so,” replied the Nightingale. “It did well as long as it could; keep it as you have done till now. I cannot build my nest in the palace to dwell in it, but let me come when I feel the wish; then I will sit in the evening on the spray yonder by the window and sing you something, so that you may be glad and thoughtful at once. I will sing of those who are happy and of those who suffer. I will sing of good and of evil that remain hidden round about you. The little singing-bird flies far around—to the poor fisherman, to the peasant’s roof, to every one who dwells far away from you and from your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet the crown has an air

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of sanctity about it. I will come and sing to you—but one thing you must promise me."

"Everything!" said the Emperor; and he stood there in his imperial robes, which he had put on himself, and pressed the sword, which was heavy with gold, to his heart.

"One thing I beg of you: tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything. Then it will go all the better."

And the Nightingale flew away.

The servants came in to look to their dead Emperor, and—yes, there he stood; and the Emperor said, "Good morning!"





XIV

THE STORKS

ON the last house in a little village stood a stork's nest. The Mother Stork sat in it with her four young ones, who stretched out their heads with the pointed black beaks, for their beaks had not yet turned red. A little way off stood the Father Stork, all alone on the ridge of the roof, quite upright and stiff; he had drawn up one of his legs so as not to be quite idle while he stood sentry. One would have thought he had been carved out of wood, so still did he stand. He thought, "It must look very grand that my wife has a sentry standing by her nest. They can't tell that it is her husband. They certainly think I have been commanded to stand here. That looks so aristocratic!" And he went on standing on one leg.

Below in the street a whole crowd of children were playing; and when they caught sight of the Storks one of the boldest of the boys, and afterward all of them, sang the old verse about the Storks. But they only sang it just as he could remember it:

"Stork, stork, long-legged stork;
Off to thy home I prithee walk.
Thy dear wife is in the nest,
Where she rocks her young to rest.

The first he will be hanged,
The second will be hit,
The third he will be shot,
And the fourth put on the spit."

"Just hear what those boys are saying!" said the little Stork children. "They say we're to be hanged and killed."

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"You're not to care for that!" said the Mother Stork. "Don't listen to it, and then it won't matter."

But the boys went on singing and pointed at the Storks mockingly with their fingers; only one boy, whose name was Peter, declared that it was a sin to make a jest of animals, and he would not join in it at all.

The Mother Stork comforted her children. "Don't you mind it at all," she said. "See how quiet your father stands, though it's only on one leg."

"We are very much afraid," said the young Storks; and they drew their heads far back into the nest.

Now to-day, when the children came out again to play and saw the Storks, they sang their song:

"The first he will be hanged,
The second will be hit."

"Shall we be hanged and beaten?" asked the young Storks.

"No, certainly not," replied the mother. "You shall learn to fly; I'll exercise you; then we shall fly out into the meadows and pay a visit to the frogs; they will bow before us in the water and sing, 'Co-ax! co-ax!' and then we shall eat them up. That will be a real pleasure."

"And what then?" asked the young Storks.

"Then all the Storks will assemble, all that are here in the whole country, and the autumn exercises begin; then one must fly well, for that is highly important, for whoever cannot fly properly will be thrust dead by the general's beak; so take care and learn well when the exercising begins."

"But then we shall be killed, as the boys say—and only listen, now they're singing again."

"Listen to me, and not to them," said the Mother Stork. "After the great review we shall fly away to the warm countries, far away from here over mountains and forests. We shall fly to Egypt, where there are three covered houses of stone which curl in a point and tower above the clouds; they are called pyramids, and are older than a stork can imagine. There is a river

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in that country which runs out of its bed, and then all the land is turned to mud. One walks about in the mud and eats frogs."

"Oh!" cried all the young ones.

"Yes! It is glorious there! One does nothing all day long but eat; and while we are so comfortable over there, here there is not a green leaf on the trees; here it is so cold that the clouds freeze to pieces and fall down in little white rags!"

It was the snow that she meant, but she could not explain it in any other way.

"And do the naughty boys freeze to pieces?" asked the young Storks.

"No, they do not freeze to pieces; but they are not far from it and must sit in the dark room and cower. You, on the other hand, can fly about in foreign lands where there are flowers and the sun shines warm."

Now some time had elapsed, and the nestlings had grown so large that they could stand upright in the nest and look far around; and the Father Stork came every day with delicious frogs, little snakes, and all kinds of stork-dainties as he found them. Oh, it looked funny when he performed feats before them! He laid his head quite back upon his tail and clapped with his beak as if he had been a little clapper; and then he told them stories all about the marshes.

"Listen! now you must learn to fly," said the Mother Stork, one day; and all the four young ones had to go out on the ridge of the roof. Oh, how they tottered! How they balanced themselves with their wings, and yet they were nearly falling down.

"Only look at me," said the Mother. "Thus you must hold your heads! Thus you must pitch your feet! One, two! one, two! That's what will help you on in the world."

Then she flew a little way, and the young ones made a little clumsy leap. Bump!—there they lay, for their bodies were too heavy.

"I will not fly!" said one of the young Storks, and crept back into the nest. "I don't care about getting to the warm countries."

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"Do you want to freeze to death here when the winter comes? Are the boys to come and hang you and singe you and roast you? Now I'll call them."

"Oh no!" cried the young Stork, and hopped out on the roof again like the rest.

On the third day they could actually fly a little, and then they thought they could also soar and hover in the air. They tried it, but—bump!—down they tumbled, and they had to shoot their wings again quickly enough. Now the boys came into the street again and sang their song:

"Stork, stork, long-legged stork!"

"Shall we fly down and pick their eyes out?" asked the young Storks.

"No," replied the mother; "let them alone. Only listen to me; that's far more important. One, two, three—now we fly round to the right. One, two, three—now to the left round the chimney! See, that was very good! The last kick with the feet was so neat and correct that you shall have permission to-morrow to fly with me to the marsh! Several nice Stork families go there with their young. Show them that mine are the nicest and that you can start proudly; that looks well and will get you consideration."

"But are we not to take revenge on the rude boys?" asked the young Storks.

"Let them scream as much as they like. You will fly up to the clouds and get to the land of the pyramids when they will have to shiver and not have a green leaf or a sweet apple."

"Yes, we will revenge ourselves!" they whispered to one another; and then the exercising went on.

Among all the boys down in the street the one most bent upon singing the teasing song was he who had begun it, and he was quite a little boy. He could hardly be more than six years old. The young Storks certainly thought he was a hundred, for he was much bigger than their mother and father; and how

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should they know how old children and grown-up people can be? Their revenge was to come upon this boy, for he it was who had begun, and he always kept on. The young Storks were very angry; and as they grew bigger they were less inclined to bear it; at last their mother had to promise them that they should be revenged, but not till the last day of their stay.

“We must first see how you behave at the grand review. If you get through badly, so that the general stabs you through the chest with his beak, the boys will be right, at least in one way. Let us see.”

“Yes, you shall see!” cried the young Storks; and then they took all imaginable pains. They practised every day, and flew so neatly and so lightly that it was a pleasure to see them.

Now the autumn came on; all the Storks began to assemble, to fly away to the warm countries while it is winter here. That *was* a review. They had to fly over forests and villages, to show how well they could soar, for it was a long journey they had before them. The young Storks did their parts so well that they got as a mark, “Remarkably well, with frogs and snakes.” That was the highest mark; and they might eat the frogs and snakes; and that is what they did.

“Now we will be revenged!” they said.

“Yes, certainly!” said the Mother Stork. “What I have thought of will be the best. I know the pond in which all the little mortals lie till the stork comes and brings them to their parents. The pretty little babies lie there and dream so sweetly as they never dream afterward. All parents are glad to have such a child, and all children want to have a sister or a brother. Now we will fly to the pond and bring one for each of the children who have not sung the naughty song and laughed at the Storks.”

“But he who began to sing—that naughty, ugly boy!” screamed the young Storks; “what shall we do with him?”

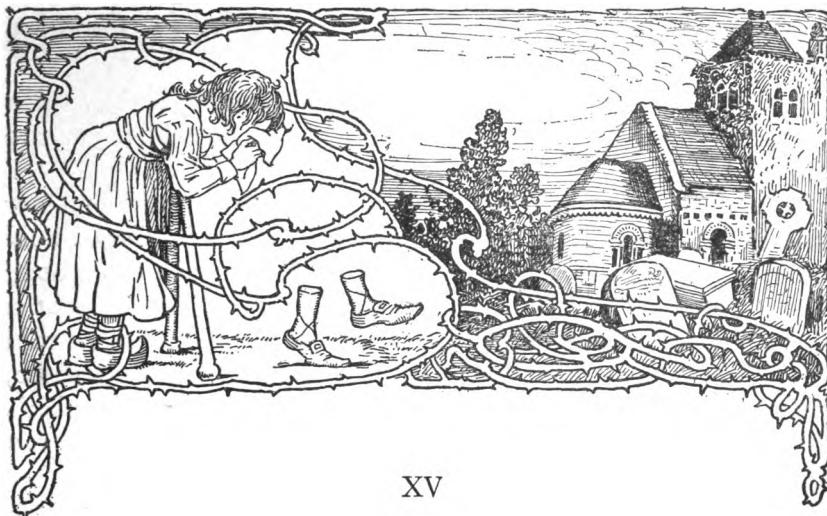
“There is a little dead child in the pond, one that has dreamed itself to death; we will bring that for him. Then he will cry because we have brought him a little dead brother. But that

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good boy—you have not forgotten him, the one who said, 'It is wrong to laugh at animals!'—for him we will bring a brother and a sister, too. And as his name is Peter, all of you shall be called Peter, too."

And it was done as she said; all the Storks were named Peter, and so they are all called even now.





XV

THE RED SHOES

THREE was once a little girl, a very nice, pretty little girl. But in summer she had to go barefoot because she was poor, and in winter she wore thick wooden shoes, so that her little instep became quite red, altogether red.

In the middle of the village lived an old shoemaker's wife; she sat and sewed, as well as she could, a pair of little shoes, of old strips of red cloth; they were clumsy enough, but well meant, and the little girl was to have them. The little girl's name was Karen.

On the day when her mother was buried she received the red shoes and wore them for the first time. They were certainly not suited for mourning, but she had no others, and therefore thrust her little bare feet into them and walked behind the plain deal coffin.

Suddenly a great carriage came by, and in the carriage sat an old lady: she looked at the little girl and felt pity for her, and said to the clergyman:

“Give me the little girl and I will provide for her.”

Karen thought this was for the sake of the shoes, but the Old Lady declared they were hideous; and they were burned. But Karen herself was clothed neatly and properly. She was taught

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to read and to sew, and the people said she was agreeable. But her mirror said, "You are much more than agreeable; you are beautiful."

Once the Queen traveled through the country, and had her little daughter with her; and the daughter was a Princess. And the people flocked toward the castle, and Karen, too, was among them; and the little Princess stood in a fine white dress at a window and let herself be gazed at. She had neither train nor golden crown, but she wore splendid red morocco shoes; they were certainly far handsomer than those the shoemaker's wife had made for little Karen. Nothing in the world can compare with red shoes!

Now Karen was old enough to be confirmed. New clothes were made for her, and she was to have new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town took the measure of her little feet; this was done in his own house, in his little room, and there stood great glass cases with neat shoes and shining boots. It had quite a charming appearance, but the Old Lady could not see well, and therefore took no pleasure in it. Among the shoes stood a red pair, just like those which the Princess had worn. How beautiful they were! The shoemaker also said they had been made for a count's child, but they had not fitted.

"That must be patent leather," observed the Old Lady, "the shoes shine so!"

"Yes, they shine!" replied Karen; and they fitted her, and were bought. But the Old Lady did not know that they were red, for she would never have allowed Karen to go to her confirmation in red shoes, and that is what Karen did.

Every one was looking at her shoes. And when she went across the church porch toward the door of the choir it seemed to her as if the old pictures on the tombstones, the portraits of clergymen and clergymen's wives, in their stiff collars and long black garments, fixed their eyes upon her red shoes. And she thought of her shoes only when the priest laid his hand upon her head and spoke holy words. And the organ pealed solemnly,

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the children sang with their fresh, sweet voices, and the old pre-
centor sang, too; but Karen thought only of her red shoes.

In the afternoon the Old Lady was informed by every one that the shoes were red, and she said it was naughty and unsuitable and that when Karen went to church in future she should always go in black shoes, even if they were old.

Next Sunday was Sacrament Sunday. And Karen looked at the black shoes, and looked at the red ones, looked at them again, and put on the red ones.

The sun shone gloriously; Karen and the Old Lady went along the foot-path through the fields, and it was rather dusty.

By the church door stood an old invalid soldier with a crutch and a long beard; the beard was rather red than white, for it was red altogether; and he bowed down almost to the ground and asked the Old Lady if he might dust her shoes. And Karen also stretched out her little foot.

“Look, what pretty dancing-shoes!” said the Old Soldier.
“Fit so tightly when you dance!”

And he tapped the soles with his hand. And the Old Lady gave the Soldier an alms, and went into the church with Karen.

And every one in the church looked at Karen’s red shoes, and all the pictures looked at them. And while Karen knelt in the church she only thought of her red shoes; and she forgot to sing her psalm and forgot to say her prayer.

Now all the people went out of church, and the Old Lady stepped into her carriage. Karen lifted up her foot to step in, too; then the Old Soldier said:

“Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!”

And Karen could not resist; she was obliged to dance a few steps, and when she once began her legs went on dancing. It was just as though the shoes had obtained power over her. She danced round the corner of the church—she could not help it; the coachman was obliged to run behind her and seize her; he lifted her into the carriage, but her feet went on dancing, so that she kicked the good Old Lady violently. At last they took off her shoes and her legs became quiet.

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At home the shoes were put away in a cupboard, but Karen could not resist looking at them.

Now the Old Lady became very ill, and it was said she would not recover. She had to be nursed and waited on; and this was no one's duty so much as Karen's. But there was to be a great ball in the town, and Karen was invited. She looked at the Old Lady who could not recover; she looked at the red shoes, and thought there would be no harm in it. She put on the shoes, and that she might very well do; but they went to the ball and began to dance.

But when she wished to go to the right hand the shoes danced to the left, and when she wanted to go up-stairs the shoes danced downward, down into the street and out at the town gate. She danced and was obliged to dance straight out into the dark wood.

There was something glistening up among the trees, and she thought it was the moon, for she saw a face. But it was the Old Soldier with the red beard; he sat and nodded and said:

“Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!”

Then she was frightened and wanted to throw away the red shoes; but they clung fast to her. And she tore off her stockings, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet. And she danced and was compelled to go dancing over field and meadow in rain and sunshine, by night and by day; but it was most dreadful at night.

She danced out into the open church-yard; but the dead there do not dance; they have far better things to do. She wished to sit down on the poor man's grave, where the bitter fern grows, but there was no peace nor rest for her. And when she danced toward the open church door she saw there an Angel in long white garments with wings that reached from his shoulders to his feet; his countenance was serious and stern, and in his hand he held a sword that was broad and gleaming.

“Thou shalt dance!” he said. “Dance in thy red shoes till thou art pale and cold, and till thy body shrivels to a skeleton. Thou shalt dance from door to door; and where proud, haughty



AN ANGEL IN LONG WHITE GARMENTS

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children dwell shalt thou knock, that they may hear thee and be afraid of thee! Thou shalt dance, dance!"

"Mercy!" cried Karen.

But she did not hear what the Angel answered, for the shoes carried her away—carried her through the door on to the field, over stock and stone, and she was always obliged to dance.

One morning she danced past a door which she knew well. There was a sound of psalm-singing within, and a coffin was carried out, adorned with flowers. Then she knew that the Old Lady was dead, and she felt that she was deserted by all and condemned by the Angel of Heaven.

She danced, and was compelled to dance—to dance in the dark night. The shoes carried her on over thorn and brier; she scratched herself till she bled; she danced away across the heath to a little lonely house. Here she knew the executioner dwelt; and she tapped with her fingers on the panes and called:

"Come out, come out! I cannot come in, for I must dance!"

And the Executioner said: "You probably don't know who I am? I cut off the bad people's heads with my ax, and mark how my ax rings!"

"Do not strike off my head," said Karen, "for if you do I cannot repent of my sin. But strike off my feet with the red shoes!"

And then she confessed all her sin, and the Executioner cut off her feet with the red shoes; but the shoes danced away with the little feet over the fields and into the deep forest.

And he cut her a pair of wooden feet with crutches and taught her a psalm which the criminals always sing; and she kissed the hand that had held the ax and went away across the heath.

"Now I have suffered pain enough for the red shoes," said she. "Now I will go into the church, that they may see me."

And she went quickly toward the church door; but when she came there the red shoes danced before her so that she was frightened and turned back.

The whole week through she was sorrowful and wept many bitter tears; but when Sunday came she said:

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"Now I have suffered and striven enough! I think that I am just as good as many of those who sit in the church and carry their heads high."

And then she went boldly on; but she did not get farther than the church-yard gate before she saw the red shoes dancing along before her; then she was seized with terror and turned back and repented of her sin right heartily.

And she went to the parsonage and begged to be taken there as a servant. She promised to be industrious and to do all she could; she did not care for wages, and only wished to be under a roof and with good people. The clergyman's wife pitied her and took her into her service. And she was industrious and thoughtful. Silently she sat and listened when in the evening the pastor read the Bible aloud. All the little ones were very fond of her; but when they spoke of dress and splendor and beauty she would shake her head.

Next Sunday they all went to church, and she was asked if she wished to go, too; but she looked sadly with tears in her eyes at her crutches. And then the others went to hear God's word; but she went alone into her little room, which was only large enough to contain her bed and a chair. And here she sat with her hymn-book; and as she read it with a pious mind the wind bore the notes of the organ over to her from the church; and she lifted her face, wet with tears, and said:

"O Lord, help me!"

Then the sun shone so brightly; and before her stood the Angel in the white garments, the same she had seen that night at the church door. But he no longer grasped the sharp sword; he held a green branch covered with roses; and he touched the ceiling, and it rose up high, and wherever he touched it a golden star gleamed forth; and he touched the walls, and they spread forth widely, and she saw the organ which was pealing its rich sounds; and she saw the old pictures of clergyman and their wives; and the congregation sat in the decorated seats and sang from their hymn-books. The church had come to the poor girl in her narrow room, or her chamber had become a church. She

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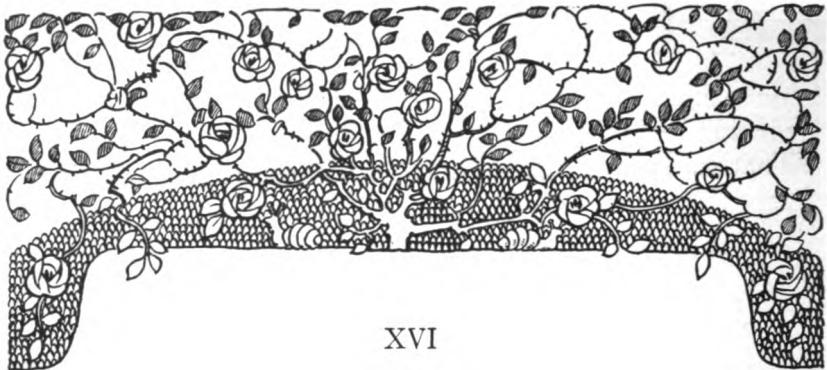
sat in the chair with the rest of the clergyman's people; and when they had finished the psalm and looked up they nodded and said:

“That was right that you came here, Karen.”

“It was mercy!” said she.

And the organ sounded its glorious notes; and the children's voices singing in chorus sounded sweet and lovely; the clear sunshine streamed so warm through the window upon the chair in which Karen sat; and her heart became so filled with sunshine, peace, and joy that it broke. Her soul flew on the sunbeams to heaven; and there was nobody who asked after the **RED SHOES!**





THE SNAIL AND THE ROSE-TREE

AROUND the garden ran a hedge of hazels; beyond this hedge lay fields and meadows wherein were cows and sheep, but in the midst of the garden stood a blooming Rose-tree, and under this Rose-tree lived a Snail who had a good deal in his shell—namely, himself.

“Wait till my time comes!” he said. “I shall do something more than produce roses, bear nuts, or give milk, like the Rose-tree, the hazel-bush, and the cows!”

“I expect a great deal of you,” said the Rose-tree. “But may I ask when it will appear?”

“I take my time,” replied the Snail. “*You* are always in such a hurry. You don’t rouse people’s interest by suspense.”

When the next year came the Snail lay almost in the same spot, in the sunshine under the Rose-tree, which again bore buds that bloomed into roses, until the snow fell and the weather became raw and cold; then the Rose-tree bowed its head and the Snail crept into the ground.

A new year began; and the roses came out, and the Snail came out also.

“You’re an old Rose-tree now!” said the Snail. “You must make haste and come to an end, for you have given the world all that was in you; whether it was of any use is a question that I have had no time to consider; but so much is clear and plain, that you have done nothing at all for your own development, or you would have produced something else. How can you answer

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for that? In a little time you will be nothing at all but a stick. Do you understand what I say?"

"You alarm me!" replied the Rose-tree. "I never thought of that at all."

"No; you have not taken the trouble to consider anything. Have you ever given an account to yourself why you bloomed, and how it is that your blooming comes about—why it is thus, and not otherwise?"

"No;" answered the Rose-tree. "I bloomed in gladness, because I could not do anything else. The sun shone and warmed me, and the air refreshed me. I drank the pure dew and the fresh rain, and I lived, I breathed. Out of the earth there arose a power within me; from above there came down a strength; I perceived a new, ever-increasing happiness, and consequently I was obliged to bloom over and over again: that was my life; I could not do otherwise."

"You have led a pleasant life," observed the Snail.

"Certainly. Everything I have was given to me," said the Rose-tree. "But more still was given to you. You are one of those deep, thoughtful characters, one of those highly gifted spirits which will cause the world to marvel."

"I've no intention of doing anything of the kind," cried the Snail. "The world is nothing to me. What have I to do with the world? I have enough of myself and in myself."

"But must we not all here on earth give to others the best we have and offer what lies in our power? Certainly I have only given roses. But you—you who have been so richly gifted—what have you given to the world? What do you intend to give?"

"What have I given—what do I intend to give? I spit at it. It's worth nothing. It's no business of mine. Continue to give your roses, if you like; you can't do any better. Let the hazel-bush bear nuts, and the cows and the ewes give milk; they have their public; but I have mine within myself—I retire within myself, and there I remain. The world is nothing to me." And so saying the Snail retired into his house and closed up the entrance after him.

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"That is very sad!" said the Rose-tree. "I cannot creep into myself, even if I wished it; I must continue to produce roses. They drop their leaves and are blown away by the wind. But I saw how a rose was laid in the matron's hymn-book, and one of my roses had a place on the bosom of a fair young girl, and another was kissed by the lips of a child in the full joy of life. That did me good; it was a real blessing. That's my remembrance—my life!"

And the Rose-tree went on blooming in innocence, while the Snail lay and idled away his time in his house—the world did not concern him.

And years rolled by.

The Snail had become dust in the dust, and the Rose-tree was earth in the earth; the rose of remembrance in the hymn-book was faded, but in the garden bloomed fresh rose-trees, and under the trees lay new snails; and these still crept into their houses, and spat at the world, for it did not concern them.

Suppose we begin the story again and read it right through. It will never alter.





XVII

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS

“**M**Y poor flowers are quite dead!” said little Ida. “They were so pretty yesterday, and now all the leaves hang withered. Why do they do that?” she asked the Student, who sat on the sofa, for she liked him very much. He knew the prettiest stories, and could cut out the most amusing pictures—hearts, with little ladies in them who danced; flowers, and great castles in which one could open the doors; he was a merry student. “Why do the flowers look so faded to-day?” she asked again, and showed him a nosegay which was quite withered.

“Do you know what’s the matter with them?” said the Student. “The flowers have been at a ball last night, and that’s why they hang their heads.

“But flowers cannot dance!” cried little Ida.

“Oh yes,” said the Student. “When it grows dark, and we are asleep, they jump about merrily. Almost every night they have a ball.”

“Can children go to this ball?”

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"Yes," said the Student; "quite little daisies and lilies-of-the-valley."

"Where do the beautiful flowers dance?" asked Ida.

"Have you not often been outside the town gate by the great castle where the king lives in summer, and where the beautiful garden is with all the flowers? You have seen the swans which swim up to you when you want to give them bread-crumbs? There are capital balls there, believe me."

"I was out there in the garden yesterday with my mother," said Ida; "but all the leaves were off the trees, and there was not one flower left. Where are they? In the summer I saw so many."

"They are within, in the castle," replied the Student. "You must know, as soon as the king and all the court go to town, the flowers run out of the garden into the castle and are merry. You should see that. The two most beautiful roses seat themselves on the throne, and then they are king and queen; all the red coxcombs range themselves on either side and stand and bow; they are the chamberlains. Then all the pretty flowers come, and there is a great ball. The blue violets represent little naval cadets; they dance with hyacinths and crocuses, which they call young ladies; the tulips and the great tiger-lilies are old ladies who keep watch that the dancing is well done and that everything goes on with propriety."

"But," asked little Ida, "is nobody there who hurts the flowers for dancing in the king's castle?"

"There is nobody who really knows about it," answered the Student. "Sometimes, certainly, the old steward of the castle comes at night, and he has to watch there. He has a great bunch of keys with him; but as soon as the flowers hear the keys rattle they are quite quiet, hide behind the long curtains, and only poke their heads out. Then the old steward says, 'I smell that there are flowers here,' but he cannot see them."

"That is famous!" cried little Ida, clapping her hands. "But should not I be able to see the flowers?"

"Yes," said the Student; "only remember when you go out

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again to peep through the window, then you will see them. That is what I did to-day. There was a long yellow lily lying on the sofa and stretching herself. She was a court lady."

"Can the flowers out of the Botanical Garden get there? Can they go the long distance?"

"Yes, certainly," replied the Student; "if they like, they can fly. Have you not seen the beautiful butterflies—red, yellow, and white? They look almost like flowers; and that is what they have been. They have flown off their stalks high into the air and have beaten it with their leaves, as if these leaves were little wings, and thus they flew. And because they behaved themselves well they got leave to fly about in the daytime, too, and were not obliged to sit still upon their stalks at home; and thus at last the leaves became real wings. That you have seen yourself. It may be, however, that the flowers in the Botanical Garden have never been in the king's castle, or that they don't know of the merry proceedings there at night. Therefore I will tell you something: he will be very much surprised, the botanical professor, who lives close by here. You know him, do you not? When you come into his garden you must tell one of the flowers that there is a great ball yonder in the castle. Then that flower will tell it to all the rest, and then they will fly away; when the professor comes out into the garden there will not be a single flower left, and he won't be able to make out where they are gone."

"But how can one flower tell it to another? For, you know, flowers cannot speak."

"That they cannot, certainly," replied the Student; "but then they make signs. Have you not noticed that when the wind blows a little the flowers nod at one another and move all their green leaves? They can understand that just as well as we when we speak together."

"Can the professor understand these signs?" asked Ida.

"Yes, certainly. He came one morning into his garden and saw a great stinging-nettle standing there and making signs to a beautiful red carnation with its leaves. It was saying, 'You

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are so pretty, and I love you with all my heart.' But the professor does not like that kind of thing, and he directly slapped the stinging-nettle upon its leaves, for those are its fingers; but he stung himself, and since that time he has not dared to touch a stinging-nettle."

"That is funny," cried little Ida; and she laughed.

"How can any one put such notions into a child's head?" said the tiresome Privy Councilor, who had come to pay a visit and was sitting on the sofa. He did not like the Student, and always grumbled when he saw him cutting out the merry, funny pictures—sometimes a man hanging on a gibbet and holding a heart in his hand to show that he stole hearts; sometimes an old witch riding on a broom and carrying her husband on her nose. The Councilor could not bear this, and then he said just as he did now, "How can any one put such notions into a child's head? Those are stupid fancies!"

But to little Ida what the Student told about her flowers seemed very droll; and she thought much about it. The flowers hung their heads, for they were tired because they had danced all night; they were certainly ill. Then she went with them to her other toys which stood on a pretty little table, and the whole drawer was full of beautiful things. In the doll's bed lay her doll Sophy, asleep; but little Ida said to her:

"You must really get up, Sophy, and manage to lie in the drawer for to-night. The poor flowers are ill, and they must lie in your bed; perhaps they will then get well again."

And she at once took the doll out; but the doll looked cross and did not say a single word; for she was cross because she could not keep her own bed.

Then Ida laid the flowers in the doll's bed, pulled the little coverlet quite up over them, and said they were to lie still and be good and she would make them some tea so that they might get well again and be able to get up to-morrow. And she drew the curtains closely round the little bed so that the sun should not shine in their eyes. The whole evening through she could not help thinking of what the Student had told her. And when

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she was going to bed herself she was obliged first to look behind the curtains which hung before the windows where her mother's beautiful flowers stood—hyacinths as well as tulips; then she whispered, "I know you are going to the ball to-night!" But the flowers made as if they did not understand a word and did not stir a leaf; but still little Ida knew what she knew.

When she was in bed she lay for a long time thinking how pretty it must be to see the beautiful flowers dancing out in the king's castle. "I wonder if my flowers have really been there?" And then she fell asleep. In the night she woke up again; she had dreamed of the flowers and of the Student with whom the Councilor found fault. It was quite quiet in the bedroom where Ida lay; the night-lamp burned on the table, and father and mother were asleep.

"I wonder if my flowers are still lying in Sophy's bed?" she thought to herself. "How I should like to know!" She raised herself a little and looked at the door, which stood ajar; within lay the flowers and all her playthings. She listened, and then it seemed to her as if she heard some one playing on the piano in the next room, but quite softly and prettily as she had never heard it before.

"Now all the flowers are certainly dancing in there!" thought she. "Oh, how glad I should be to see it!" But she dared not get up, for she would have disturbed her father and mother.

"If they would only come in!" thought she. But the flowers did not come, and the music continued to play beautifully; then she could not bear it any longer, for it was too pretty; she crept out of her little bed and went quietly to the door and looked into the room.

Oh, how splendid it was, what she saw!

There was no night-lamp burning, but still it was quite light; the moon shone through the window into the middle of the floor; it was almost like day. All the hyacinths and tulips stood in two long rows in the room; there were none at all left at the window—there stood the empty flower-pots. On the floor all the flowers were dancing very gracefully round one another, mak-

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ing perfect turns and holding one another by the long green leaves as they swung round. But at the piano sat a great yellow lily which little Ida had certainly seen in the summer, for she remembered how the Student had said, "How like that one is to Miss Lina." Then he had been laughed at by all; but now it seemed really to little Ida as if the long, yellow flower looked like the young lady; and it had just her manners in playing—sometimes bending its long, yellow face to one side, sometimes to the other, and nodding in tune to the charming music! No one noticed little Ida. Then she saw a great blue crocus hop into the middle of the table where the toys stood and go to the doll's bed and pull the curtains aside; there lay the sick flowers, but they got up directly and nodded to the others, to say that they wanted to dance, too. The old Chimney-sweep doll, whose underlip was broken off, stood up and bowed to the pretty flowers; these did not look at all ill now; they jumped down to the others and were very merry.

Then it seemed as if something fell down from the table. Ida looked that way. It was the Birch Rod which was jumping down! It seemed almost as if it belonged to the flowers. At any rate, it was very neat. And a little Wax Doll, with just such a broad hat on its head as the Councilor wore, sat upon it. The Birch Rod hopped about among the flowers on its three legs and stamped quite loud, for it was dancing the mazurka; and the other flowers could not manage that dance, because they were too light and unable to stamp like that.

The Wax Doll on the Birch Rod all at once became quite great and long, turned itself over the Paper Flowers, and said, "How can one put such things in a child's head? Those are stupid fancies!" and then the Wax Doll was exactly like the Councilor with the broad hat, and looked just as yellow and cross as he. But the Paper Flowers hit him on his thin legs, and then he shrank up again and became quite a little wax doll. That was very amusing to see; and little Ida could not restrain her laughter. The Birch Rod went on dancing, and the Councilor was obliged to dance too; it was no use, he might make himself

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great and long or remain the little yellow Wax Doll with the big black hat. Then the other flowers put in a good word for him, especially those who had lain in the Doll's bed, and then the Birch Rod gave over. At the same momemt there was a loud knocking at the drawer inside where Ida's doll, Sophy, lay with many other toys. The Chimney-sweep ran to the edge of the table, lay flat down on his stomach, and began to pull the drawer out a little. Then Sophy raised herself and looked round, quite astonished.

"There must be a ball here," said she. "Why did nobody tell me?"

"Will you dance with me?" asked the Chimney-sweep.

"You are a nice sort of fellow to dance!" she replied, and turned her back upon him.

Then she seated herself upon the drawer and thought that one of the flowers would come and ask her, but not one of them came. Then she coughed, "Hem! hem! hem!" but for all that not one came. The Chimney-sweep now danced all alone, and that was not at all so bad.

As none of the flowers seemed to notice Sophy, she let herself fall down from the drawer straight upon the floor so that there was a great noise. The flowers now all came running up to ask if she had not hurt herself; and they were all very polite to her, especially the flowers that had lain in her bed. But she had not hurt herself at all; and Ida's flowers all thanked her for the nice bed, and were kind to her, took her into the middle of the room, where the moon shone in, and danced with her; and all the other flowers formed a circle round her. Now Sophy was glad, and said they might keep her bed; she did not at all mind lying in the drawer.

But the flowers said: "We thank you heartily, but in any way we cannot live long. To-morrow we shall be quite dead. But tell little Ida she is to bury us out in the garden, where the canary lies; then we shall wake up again in summer and be far more beautiful."

"No, you must not die," said Sophy; and she kissed the flowers.

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Then the room door opened, and a great number of splendid flowers came dancing in. Ida could not imagine whence they had come; these must certainly all be flowers from the king's castle yonder. First of all came two glorious roses, and they had little gold crowns on; they were a king and a queen. Then came the prettiest stocks and carnations; and they bowed in all directions. They had music with them. Great poppies and peonies blew upon pea-pods till they were quite red in the face. The blue hyacinths and the little white snow-drops rang just as if they had been bells. That was wonderful music! Then came many other flowers and danced all together; the blue violets and the pink primroses, daisies and the lilies-of-the-valley. And all the flowers kissed one another. It was beautiful to look at!

At last the flowers wished one another good night; then little Ida, too, crept to bed, where she dreamed of all she had seen.

When she rose next morning she went quickly to the little table to see if the pretty flowers were still there. She drew aside the curtains of the little bed; there were they all, but they were quite faded, far more than yesterday. Sophy was lying in the drawer where Ida had laid her; she looked very sleepy.

"Do you remember what you were to say to me?" asked little Ida.

But Sophy looked quite stupid, and did not say a single word.

"You are not good at all!" said Ida. "And yet they all danced with you."

Then she took a little paper box, on which were painted beautiful birds, and opened it, and laid the dead flowers in it.

"That shall be your pretty coffin," said she, "and when my cousins come to visit me by and by they shall help me to bury you outside in the garden, so that you may grow again in summer and become more beautiful than ever."

These cousins were two merry boys. Their names were Gustave and Adolphe; their father had given each of them a new cross-bow, and they had brought these with them to show to Ida. She told them about the poor flowers which had died, and then they got leave to bury them. The two boys went



SHOT WITH THEIR CROSSBOWS OVER THE GRAVE

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first, with their cross-bows on their shoulders, and little Ida followed with the dead flowers in the pretty box. Out in the garden a little grave was dug. Ida first kissed the flowers, and then laid them in the earth in the box, and Adolphe and Gustave shot with their cross-bows over the grave, for they had neither guns nor cannon.





XVIII

THE FLYING TRUNK

THREE was once a merchant who was so rich that he could pave the whole street with gold and almost have enough left for a little lane. But he did not do that; he knew how to employ his money differently. When he spent a shilling he got back a crown, such a clever merchant was he; and this continued till he died.

His son now got all this money; and he lived merrily, going to the masquerade every evening, making kites out of dollar notes, and playing at ducks and drakes on the sea-coast with gold pieces instead of pebbles. In this way the money might soon be spent, and indeed it was so. At last he had no more than four shillings left, and no clothes to wear but a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown. Now his friends did not trouble themselves any more about him, as they could not walk with him in the street; but one of them, who was good-natured, sent him an old trunk, with the remark, "Pack up!" Yes, that was all very well, but he had nothing to pack, therefore he seated himself in the trunk.

That was a wonderful trunk. So soon as any one pressed the lock the trunk could fly. He pressed, and, *whir'* away flew the trunk with him through the chimney and over the clouds, farther and farther away. But as often as the bottom of the trunk

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cracked a little he was in great fear lest it might go to pieces, and then he would have flung a fine somersault. In that way he came to the land of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under some dry leaves, and then went into the town. He could do that very well, for among the Turks all the people went about dressed like himself, in dressing-gown and slippers. Then he met a nurse with a little child.

“Here, you Turkish nurse,” he began, “what kind of a great castle is that close by the town, in which the windows are so high up?”

“There dwells the Sultan’s daughter,” replied she. “It is prophesied that she will be very unhappy respecting a lover; and therefore nobody may go near her unless the Sultan and Sultana are there, too.”

“Thank you!” said the Merchant’s Son; and he went out into the forest, seated himself in his trunk, flew on the roof, and crept through the window into the Princess’s room.

She was lying asleep on the sofa, and she was so beautiful that the Merchant’s Son was compelled to kiss her. Then she awoke, and was startled very much; but he said he was a Turkish angel who had come down to her through the air, and that pleased her.

They sat down side by side, and he told her stories about her eyes; and he told her they were the most glorious dark lakes, and that thoughts were swimming about in them like mermaids. And he told her about her forehead; that it was a snowy mountain with the most splendid halls and pictures. And he told her about the stork who brings the lovely little children.

Yes, those were fine histories! Then he asked the Princess if she would marry him, and she said, “Yes,” directly.

“But you must come here on Saturday,” said she. “Then the Sultan and Sultana will be here to tea. They will be very proud that I am to marry a Turkish angel. But take care that you know a very pretty story, for both my parents are very fond indeed of stories. My mother likes them high-flown and moral, but my father likes them merry, so that one can laugh.”

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"Yes, I shall bring no marriage gift but a story," said he; and so they parted. But the Princess gave him a saber, the sheath embroidered with gold pieces, and that was very useful to him.

Now he flew away, bought a new dressing-gown, and sat in the forest and made up a story; it was to be ready by Saturday, and that was not an easy thing.

By the time he had finished it Saturday had come. The Sultan and his wife and all the court were at the Princess's to tea. He was received very graciously.

"Will you relate us a story?" said the Sultana; "one that is deep and edifying."

"Yes, but one that we can laugh at," said the Sultan.

"Certainly," he replied; and so began.

And now listen well.

"There was once a bundle of Matches, and these Matches were particularly proud of their high descent. Their genealogical tree—that is to say, the great fir-tree of which each of them was a little splinter—had been a great old tree out in the forest. The Matches now lay between a Tinder-box and an old Iron Pot; and they were telling about the days of their youth. 'Yes, when we were upon the green boughs,' they said, 'then we really were upon the green boughs! Every morning and evening there was diamond tea for us—I mean dew; we had sunshine all day long whenever the sun shone, and all the little birds had to tell stories. We could see very well that we were rich, for the other trees were only dressed out in summer, while our family had the means to wear green dresses in the winter as well. But then the wood-cutter came, like a great revolution, and our family was broken up. The head of the family got an appointment as mainmast in a first-rate ship which could sail round the world if necessary; the other branches went to other places, and now we have the office of kindling a light for the vulgar herd. That's how we grand people came to be in the kitchen.'

"'My fate was of a different kind,' said the Iron Pot which stood next to the Matches. 'From the beginning, ever since

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I came into the world, there has been a great deal of scouring and cooking done in me. I look after the practical part, and am the first here in the house. My only pleasure is to sit in my place after dinner, very clean and neat, and to carry on a sensible conversation with my comrades. But except the Water-pot, which is sometimes taken down into the courtyard, we always live within our four walls. Our only newsmonger is the Market-basket; but he speaks very uneasily about the government and the people. Yes, the other day there was an old pot that fell down, from fright, and burst. He's liberal, I can tell you! 'Now you're talking too much,' the Tinder-box interrupted, and the steel struck against the flint, so that sparks flew out. 'Shall we not have a merry evening?'

"Yes, let us talk about who is the grandest," said the Matches.

"No, I don't like to talk about myself," retorted the Pot. "Let us get up an evening entertainment. I will begin. I will tell a story from real life, something that every one has experienced, so that we can easily imagine the situation and take pleasure in it. On the Baltic, by the Danish shore—"

"That's a pretty beginning!" cried all the Plates. "That will be a story we shall like."

"Yes, it happened to me in my youth when I lived in a family where the furniture was polished, the floors scoured, and new curtains were put up every fortnight."

"What an interesting way you have of telling a story!" said the Carpet-broom. "One can tell directly that a man is speaking who has been in woman's society. There's something pure runs through it."

"And the Pot went on telling his story, and the end was as good as the beginning.

"All the Plates rattled with joy, and the Carpet-broom brought some green parsley out of the dust-hole and put it like a wreath on the Pot, for he knew that it would vex the others. 'If I crown him to-day,' he thought, 'he will crown me to-morrow.'

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“Now I'll dance,” said the Fire-tongs; and he danced. Preserve us! how that implement could lift up one leg! The old Chair-cushion burst to see it. ‘Shall I be crowned, too?’ thought the Tongs; and indeed a wreath was awarded.

“They're only common people, after all!” thought the Matches.

“Now the Tea-urn was to sing; but she said she had taken cold and could not sing unless she felt boiling within. But that was only affectation; she did not want to sing except when she was in the parlor with the grand people.

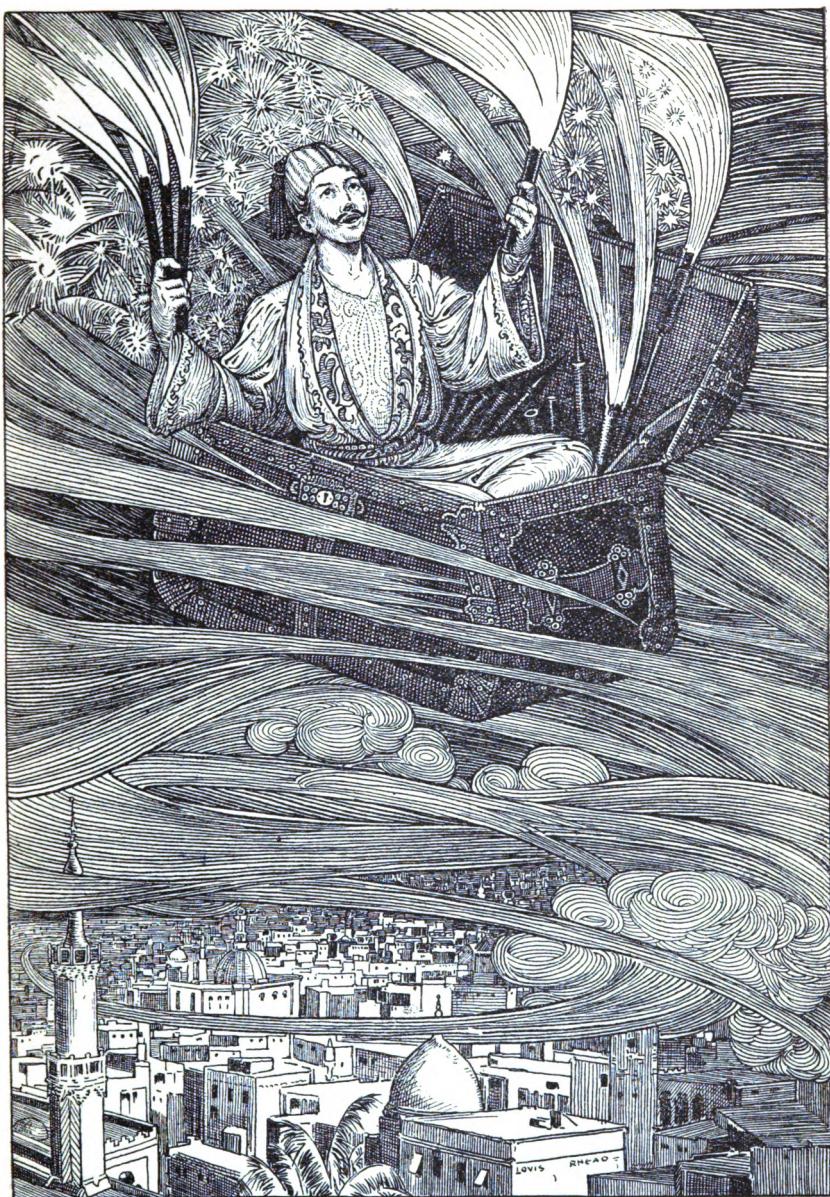
“In the window sat an old Quill Pen with which the maid generally wrote; there was nothing remarkable about this Pen except that it had been dipped too deep into the ink, but she was proud of that. ‘If the Tea-urn won't sing,’ she said, ‘she may leave it alone. Outside hangs a nightingale in a cage, and he can sing. He hasn't had any education, but this evening we'll say nothing about that.’

“I think it very wrong,” said the Tea-kettle—he was the kitchen singer and half-brother to the Tea-urn—‘that that rich and foreign bird should be listened to! Is that patriotic? Let the Market-basket decide.’

“I am vexed,” said the Market-basket. ‘No one can imagine how much I am secretly vexed. Is that a proper way of spending the evening? Would it not be more sensible to put the house in order? Let each one go to his own place, and I will arrange the whole game. That would be quite another thing.’

“Yes, let us make a disturbance,” cried they all. Then the door opened and the maid came in, and they all stood still; not one stirred. But there was not one pot among them who did not know what he could do and how grand he was. ‘Yes, if I had liked,’ each one thought, ‘it might have been a very merry evening.’

“The servant-girl took the Matches and lighted the fire with them. Mercy! how they sputtered and burst out into flame! ‘Now every one can see,’ thought they, ‘that we are



“CRACK!” HOW THEY WENT OFF!

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the first. How we shine! what a light!'—and they burned out."

"That was a capital story," said the Sultana. "I feel myself quite carried away to the kitchen, to the Matches. Yes, now thou shalt marry our daughter."

"Yes, certainly," said the Sultan, "thou shalt marry our daughter on Monday."

And they called him *thou* because he was to belong to the family.

The wedding was decided on, and on the evening before it the whole city was illuminated. Biscuits and cakes were thrown among the people, the street-boys stood on their toes, called out "Hurrah!" and whistled on their fingers. It was uncommonly splendid.

"Yes, I shall have to give something as a treat," thought the Merchant's Son. So he bought rockets and crackers, and every imaginable sort of firework, put them all into his trunk, and flew up into the air.

"Crack!" how they went, and how they went off! All the Turks hopped up with such a start that their slippers flew about their ears; such a meteor they had never yet seen. Now they could understand that it must be a Turkish angel who was going to marry the Princess.

What stories people tell! Every one whom he asked about it had seen it in a separate way; but one and all thought it fine.

"I saw the Turkish angel himself," said one. "He had eyes like glowing stars and a beard like foaming water."

"He flew up in a fiery mantle," said another; "the most lovely little cherub peeped forth from among the folds."

Yes, they were wonderful things that he heard; and on the following day he was to be married.

Now he went back to the forest to rest himself in his trunk. But what had become of that? A spark from the fireworks had set fire to it, and the trunk was burned to ashes. He could not fly any more, and could not get to his bride.

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She stood all day on the roof waiting; and most likely she is waiting still. But he wanders through the world telling fairy tales; but they are not so merry as that one he told about the Matches.





XIX

THE TINDER-BOX

THERE came a Soldier marching along the highroad—*one, two! one, two!* He had his knapsack on his back and a saber by his side, for he had been in the wars and now wanted to go home. And on the way he met with an old Witch; she was very hideous, and her underlip hung down upon her breast. She said: “Good evening, Soldier. What a fine sword you have, and what a big knapsack! You’re a proper soldier! Now you shall have as much money as you like to have.”

“I thank you, you old Witch!” said the Soldier.

“Do you see that great tree?” quoth the Witch; and she pointed to a tree which stood beside them. “It’s quite hollow inside. You must climb to the top, and then you’ll see a hole through which you can let yourself down and get deep into the tree. I’ll tie a rope round your body so that I can pull you up again when you call me.”

“What am I to do down in the tree?” asked the Soldier.

“Get money,” replied the Witch. “Listen to me. When you come down to the earth under the tree you will find yourself in a great hall; it is quite light, for above three hundred lamps are burning there. Then you will see three doors; these you can open, for the keys are hanging there. If you go into the

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first chamber you'll see a great chest in the middle of the floor; on this chest sits a dog, and he's got a pair of eyes as big as two teacups. But you need not care for that. I'll give you my blue-checked apron, and you can spread it out upon the floor; then go up quickly and take the dog and set him on my apron; then open the chest and take as many shillings as you like. They are of copper; if you prefer silver you must go into the second chamber. But there sits a dog with a pair of eyes as big as mill-wheels. But do not you care for that. Set him upon my apron and take some of the money. And if you want gold you can have that, too—in fact, as much as you can carry—if you go into the third chamber. But the dog that sits on the money-chest there has two eyes as big as round towers. He is a fierce dog, you may be sure, but you needn't be afraid, for all that. Only set him on my apron and he won't hurt you; and take out of the chest as much gold as you like."

"That's not so bad," said the Soldier. "But what am I to give you, you old Witch, for you will not do it for nothing, I fancy?"

"No," replied the Witch, "not a single shilling will I have. You shall only bring me an old Tinder-box which my grandmother forgot when she was down there last."

"Then tie the rope round my body," cried the Soldier.

"Here it is," said the Witch, "and here's my blue-checked apron."

Then the Soldier climbed up into the tree, let himself slip down into the hole, and stood, as the Witch had said, in the great hall where the three hundred lamps were burning.

Now he opened the first door. Ugh! there sat the dog with eyes as big as teacups staring at him. "You're a nice fellow!" exclaimed the Soldier; and he set him on the Witch's apron and took as many copper shillings as his pockets would hold, and then locked the chest, set the dog on it again, and went into the second chamber. Aha! there sat the dog with eyes as big as mill-wheels.

"You should not stare so hard at me," said the Soldier; "you

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might strain your eyes." And he set the dog upon the Witch's apron. And when he saw the silver money in the chest he threw away all the copper money he had and filled his pockets and his knapsack with silver only. Then he went into the third chamber. Oh, but that was horrid! The dog there really had eyes as big as towers, and they turned round and round in his head like wheels.

"Good evening!" said the Soldier; and he touched his cap, for he had never seen such a dog as that before. When he had looked at him a little more closely he thought, "That will do," and lifted him down to the floor and opened the chest. Mercy! what a quantity of gold was there! He could buy with it the whole town, and the sugar sucking-pigs of the cake-woman, and all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the whole world. Yes, that was a quantity of money! Now the Soldier threw away all the silver coin with which he had filled his pockets and his knapsack and took gold instead; yes, all his pockets, his knapsack, his boots, and his cap were filled so that he could scarcely walk. Now indeed he had plenty of money. He put the dog on the chest, shut the door, and then called up through the tree, "Now pull me up, you old Witch."

"Have you the Tinder-box?" asked the Witch.

"Plague on it!" exclaimed the Soldier. "I had clean forgotten that." And he went and brought it.

The Witch drew him up, and he stood on the highroad again with pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap full of gold.

"What are you going to do with the Tinder-box?" asked the Soldier.

"That's nothing to you," retorted the Witch. "You have your money; just give me the Tinder-box."

"Nonsense!" said the Soldier. "Tell me directly what you're going to do with it, or I'll draw my sword and cut off your head."

"No!" cried the Witch.

So the Soldier cut off her head. There she lay! But he tied up all his money in her apron, took it on his back like a bundle,

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put the Tinder-box in his pocket, and went straight off toward the town.

That was a splendid town! And he put up at the very best inn, and asked for the finest rooms, and ordered his favorite dishes, for now he was rich, as he had so much money. The servant who had to clean his boots certainly thought them a remarkably old pair for such a rich gentleman; but he had not bought any new ones yet. The next day he procured proper boots and handsome clothes. Now our Soldier had become a fine gentleman; and the people told him of all the splendid things which were in their city, and about the King, and what a pretty Princess the King's daughter was.

"Where can one get to see her?" asked the Soldier.

"She is not to be seen at all," said they all together; "she lives in a great copper castle with a great many walls and towers round about it; no one but the King may go in and out there, for it has been prophesied that she shall marry a common soldier, and the King can't bear that."

"I should like to see her," thought the Soldier; but he could not get leave to do so. Now he lived merrily, went to the theater, drove in the King's garden, and gave much money to the poor; and this was very kind of him, for he knew from old times how hard it is when one has not a shilling. Now he was rich, had fine clothes, and gained many friends who all said he was a rare one, a true cavalier; and that pleased the Soldier well. But as he spent money every day and never earned any, he had at last only two shillings left; and he was obliged to turn out of the fine rooms in which he had dwelt, and had to live in a little garret under the roof and clean his boots for himself and mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to see him, for there were too many stairs to climb.

It was quite dark one evening, and he could not even buy himself a candle, when it occurred to him that there was a candle-end in the Tinder-box which he had taken out of the hollow tree into which the Witch had helped him. He brought out the Tinder-box and the candle-end; but as soon as he struck



SHE SAT UPON THE DOG'S BACK AND SLEPT

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fire and the sparks rose up from the flint the door flew open, and the dog who had eyes as big as a couple of teacups and whom he had seen in the tree stood before him and said:

“What are my lord’s commands?”

“What is this?” said the Soldier. “That’s a famous Tinder-box if I can get everything with it that I want! Bring me some money,” said he to the dog; and, *whisk!* the dog was gone, and, *whisk!* he was back again with a great bag full of shillings in his mouth.

Now the Soldier knew what a capital Tinder-box this was. If he struck it once the dog came who sat upon the chest of copper money; if he struck it twice the dog came who had the silver; and if he struck it three times then appeared the dog who had the gold. Now the Soldier moved back into the fine rooms and appeared again in handsome clothes; and all his friends knew him again and cared very much for him indeed.

Once he thought to himself: “It is a very strange thing that one cannot get to see the Princess. They all say she is very beautiful; but what is the use of that if she has always to sit in the great copper castle with the many towers? Can I not get to see her at all? Where is my Tinder-box?” And so he struck a light, and, *whisk!* came the dog with eyes as big as teacups.

“It is midnight, certainly,” said the Soldier, “but I should very much like to see the Princess only for one little moment.”

And the dog was outside the door directly, and, before the Soldier thought it, came back with the Princess. She sat upon the dog’s back and slept; and every one could see she was a real princess, for she was so lovely. The Soldier could not refrain from kissing her, for he was a thorough soldier. Then the dog ran back with the Princess. But when morning came and the King and the Queen were drinking tea, the Princess said she had had a strange dream the night before about a dog and a soldier—that she had ridden upon the dog and the soldier had kissed her.

“That would be a fine history!” said the Queen.

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So one of the old court ladies had to watch the next night by the Princess's bed to see if this was really a dream or what it might be.

The Soldier had a great longing to see the lovely Princess again; so the dog came in the night, took her away, and ran as fast as he could. But the old lady put on water-boots, and ran just as fast after him. When she saw that they both entered a great house she thought, "Now I know where it is"; and with a bit of chalk she drew a great cross on the door. Then she went home and lay down, and the dog came up with the Princess; but when he saw that there was a cross drawn on the door where the Soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk, too, and drew crosses on all the doors in the town. And that was cleverly done, for now the lady could not find the right door, because all the doors had crosses upon them.

In the morning early came the King and the Queen, the old court lady, and all the officers, to see where it was the Princess had been. "Here it is!" said the King, when he saw the first door with a cross upon it. "No, my dear husband, it is there!" said the Queen, who descried another door which also showed a cross. "But there is one, and there is one!" said all, for wherever they looked there were crosses on the doors. So they saw that it would avail them nothing if they searched on.

But the Queen was an exceedingly clever woman, who could do more than ride in a coach. She took her great gold scissors, cut a piece of silk into pieces, and made a neat little bag; this bag she filled with fine wheat flour and tied it on the Princess's back; and when that was done she cut a little hole in the bag, so that the flour would be scattered along all the way which the Princess should take.

In the night the dog came again, took the Princess on his back, and ran with her to the Soldier, who loved her very much and would gladly have been a prince so that he might have her for his wife. The dog did not notice at all how the flour ran out in a stream from the castle to the windows of the Soldier's house, where he ran up the wall with the Princess. In the morn-

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ing the King and the Queen saw well enough where their daughter had been, and they took the Soldier and put him in prison.

There he sat. Oh, but it was dark and disagreeable there! And they said to him, "To-morrow you shall be hanged." That was not amusing to hear, and he had left his Tinder-box at the inn. In the morning he could see through the iron grating of the little window how the people were hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums beat and saw the soldiers marching. All the people were running out, and among them was a shoemaker's boy with leather apron and slippers, and he galloped so fast that one of his slippers flew off and came right against the wall where the Soldier sat looking through the iron grating.

"Halloo, you shoemaker's boy! You needn't be in such a hurry!" cried the Soldier to him. "It will not begin till I come. But if you will run to where I lived and bring me my Tinder-box, you shall have four shillings; but you must put your best leg foremost."

The shoemaker's boy wanted to get the four shillings, so he went and brought the Tinder-box, and—well, we shall hear now what happened.

Outside the town a great gallows had been built, and round it stood the soldiers and many hundred thousand people. The King and the Queen sat on a splendid throne opposite to the judges and the whole council. The Soldier already stood upon the ladder; but as they were about to put the rope round his neck he said that before a poor criminal suffered his punishment an innocent request was always granted to him. He wanted very much to smoke a pipe of tobacco, and it would be the last pipe he should smoke in the world. The King would not say "No" to this; so the Soldier took his Tinder-box and struck fire. One—two—three!—and there suddenly stood all the dogs—the one with eyes as big as teacups, the one with eyes as large as mill-wheels, and the one whose eyes were as big as round towers.

"Help me now, so that I may not be hanged," said the Soldier. And the dogs fell upon the judges and all the council, seized

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one by the leg and another by the nose, and tossed them all many feet into the air, so that they fell down and were all broken to pieces.

"I won't!" cried the King; but the biggest dog took him and the Queen and threw them after the others. Then the soldiers were afraid, and the people cried, "Little Soldier, you shall be our king and marry the beautiful Princess!"

So they put the Soldier into the King's coach, and all the three dogs darted on in front and cried "Hurrah!" and the boys whistled through their fingers, and the soldiers presented arms. The Princess came out of the copper castle and became Queen, and she liked that well enough. The wedding lasted a week, and the three dogs sat at the table, too, and opened their eyes wider than ever at all they saw.





XX

FIVE OUT OF ONE SHELL

HERE were five peas in one shell; they were green, and the pod was green, and so they thought all the world was green; and that was just as it should be! The shell grew, and the peas grew; they accommodated themselves to circumstances, sitting all in a row. The sun shone without and warmed the husk, and the rain made it clear and transparent; it was mild and agreeable in the bright day and in the dark night, just as it should be, and the peas as they sat there became bigger and bigger, and more and more thoughtful, for something they must do.

“Are we to sit here everlastingly?” asked one. “I’m afraid we shall become hard by long sitting. It seems to me there must be something outside; I have a kind of inkling of it.”

And weeks went by. The peas became yellow, and the pod also.

“All the world’s turning yellow,” said they; and they had a right to say it.

Suddenly they felt a tug at the shell. The shell was torn off, passed through human hands, and glided down into the pocket of a jacket in company with other full pods.

“Now we shall soon be opened!” they said; and that is just what they were waiting for.

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"I should like to know who of us will get farthest!" said the smallest of the five. "Yes, now it will soon show itself."

"What is to be will be," said the biggest.

"Crack!" the pod burst, and all the five peas rolled out into the bright sunshine. There they lay in a child's hand. A little boy was clutching them, and said they were fine peas for his pea-shooter; and he put one in directly and shot it out.

"Now I'm flying out into the wide world. Catch me if you can!" And he was gone.

"I," said the second, "I shall fly straight into the sun. That's a shell worth looking at, and one that exactly suits me." And away he went.

"We'll go to sleep wherever we arrive," said the next two; "but we shall roll on all the same." And they certainly rolled and tumbled down on the ground before they got into the pea-shooter; but they were put in, for all that. "We shall go farthest," said they.

"What is to happen will happen," said the last as he was shot forth out of the pea-shooter; and he flew up against the old board under the garret window just into a crack which was filled up with moss and soft mold; and the moss closed round him; there he lay a prisoner indeed, but not forgotten by provident Nature.

"What is to happen will happen," said he.

Within, in the little garret, lived a poor woman who went out in the day to clean stoves, chop wood small, and to do other hard work of the same kind, for she was strong, and industrious, too. But she always remained poor; and at home in the garret lay her half-grown only daughter, who was very delicate and weak; for a whole year she had kept her bed, and it seemed as if she could neither live nor die.

"She is going to her little sister," the woman said. "I had only the two children, and it was not an easy thing to provide for both, but the good God provided for one of them by taking her home to Himself; now I should be glad to keep the other that was left me; but I suppose they are not to remain separated, and my sick girl will go to her sister in heaven."

But the sick girl remained where she was. She lay quiet

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and patient all day long while her mother went to earn money out of doors. It was spring; and early in the morning, just as the mother was about to go out to work, the sun shone mildly and pleasantly through the little window and threw its rays across the floor, and the sick girl fixed her eyes on the lowest pane in the window.

“What may that green thing be that looks in at the window? It is moving in the wind.”

And the mother stepped to the window and half opened it. “Oh!” said she, “on my word, that is a little pea which has taken root here and is putting out its little leaves. How can it have got here into the crack? That is a little garden with which you can amuse yourself.”

And the sick girl’s bed was moved nearer to the window so that she could always see the growing pea; and the mother went forth to her work.

“Mother, I think I shall get well,” said the sick child, in the evening. “The sun shone in upon me to-day delightfully warm. The little pea is prospering famously, and I shall prosper, too, and get up and go out into the warm sunshine.”

“God grant it!” said the mother, but she did not believe it would be; but she took care to prop with a little stick the green plant which had given her daughter the pleasant thoughts of life, so that it might not be broken by the wind; she tied a piece of string to the window-sill and to the upper part of the frame, so that the pea might have something round which it could twine when it shot up; and it did shoot up indeed—one could see how it grew every day.

“Really, here is a flower coming!” said the woman one day; and now she began to cherish the hope that her sick daughter would recover. She remembered that lately the child had spoken much more cheerfully than before, that in the last few days she had risen up in bed of her own accord, and had sat upright, looking with delighted eyes at the little garden in which only one plant grew. A week afterward the invalid for the first time sat up for a whole hour. Quite happy, she sat there in the warm

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sunshine; the window was opened, and outside before it stood a pink pea-blossom fully blown. The sick girl bent down and gently kissed the delicate leaves. This day was like a festival.

"The Heavenly Father Himself has planted that pea and caused it to prosper, to be a joy to you and to me also, my blessed child!" said the glad mother; and she smiled at the flower as if it had been a good angel.

But about the other peas? Why, the one who flew out into the wide world and said, "Catch me if you can," fell into the gutter on the roof and found a home in a pigeon's crop; the two lazy ones got just as far, for they, too, were eaten up by pigeons, and thus, at any rate, they were of some real use; but the fourth, who wanted to go up into the sun, fell into the sink and lay there in the dirty water for weeks and weeks and swelled prodigiously.

"How beautifully fat I'm growing!" said the Pea. "I shall burst at last; and I don't think any pea can do more than that. I'm the most remarkable of all the five that were in the shell."

And the Sink said he was right.

But the young girl at the garret window stood there with gleaming eyes, with the roseate hue of health on her cheeks, and folded her thin hands over the pea-blossom, and thanked Heaven for it.

"I," said the Sink, "stand up for my own pea."





XXI

“WHAT THE GOODMAN DOES IS SURE TO BE RIGHT!”

I AM going to tell you a story that was told to me when I was a little one, and which I like better and better the oftener I think of it. For it is with stories as with some men and women, the older they grow the pleasanter they grow, and that is delightful!

Of course you have been in the country? Well, then, you must have seen a regularly poor old cottage. Moss and weeds spring up amid the thatch of the roof, a stork's nest decorates the chimney (the stork can never be dispensed with), the walls are aslant, the windows low (in fact, only one of them can be shut), the baking-oven projects forward, and an elder-bush leans over the gate, where you will see a tiny pond with a duck and ducklings in it, close under a knotted old willow-tree. Yes, and then there is a watch-dog that barks at every passer-by.

Just such a poor little cottage as this was the one in my story, and in it dwelt a husband and wife. Few as their possessions were, one of them they could do without, and that was a horse that used to graze in the ditch beside the highroad. The good-

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man rode on it to town, he lent it to his neighbors, and received slight services from them in return, but still it would be more profitable to sell the horse or else exchange it for something they could make of more frequent use. But which should they do, sell or exchange?

"Why, you will find out what is best, goodman," said the wife. "Isn't this market-day? Come, ride off to the town—get money or what you can for the horse—whatever you do is sure to be right. Make haste for the market!"

So she tied on his neckerchief—for that was a matter she understood better than he—she tied it with a double knot, and made him look quite spruce; she dusted his hat with the palm of her hand; and she kissed him and sent him off riding the horse that was to be either sold or bartered. Of course he would know what to do.

The sun was hot, and not a cloud in the sky. The road was dusty, and such a crowd of folk passed on their way to market, some in wagons, some on horseback, some on their own legs. A fierce sun, and no shade all the way.

A man came driving a cow—as pretty a cow as could be. "That creature must give beautiful milk," thought the Peasant; "it would not be a bad bargain if I got that. I say, you fellow with the cow!" he began aloud. "Let's have some talk together. Look you, a horse, I believe, costs more than a cow, but it is all the same to me, as I have more use for a cow. Shall we make an exchange?"

"To be sure!" was the answer; and the bargain was made.

The goodman might just as well now turn homeward—he had finished his business. But he had made up his mind to go to market, so to market he must go, if only to look on; so with his cow he continued on his way. He trudged fast; so did the cow; and soon they overtook a man who was leading a sheep—a sheep in good condition, well clothed with wool.

"I should very much like to have that!" thought the Peasant. "It would find pasture enough by our roadside, and in winter



SO SHE TIED ON HIS NECKERCHIEF AND MADE HIM
LOOK QUITE SPRUCE

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we might take it into our room. And really it would be more reasonable for us to be keeping a sheep than a cow. Shall we exchange?"

Yes, the man who owned the sheep was quite willing; so the exchange was made, and the goodman now went on with his sheep. Presently there passed him a man with a big goose under his arm.

"Well, you have got a heavy fellow there!" quoth the Peasant. "Feathers and fat in plenty! How nicely we could tie her up near our little pond, and it would be something for the goodwife to gather up the scraps for. She has often said, 'If we had but a goose!' Now she can have one—and she shall, too! Will you exchange? I will give you my sheep for your goose, and say, 'Thank you,' besides."

The other had no objection, so the Peasant had his will and his goose. He was now close to the town; he was wearied with the heat and the crowd, folk and cattle pushing past him, thronging on the road, in the ditch, and close up to the turnpike-man's cabbage-garden, where his one hen was tied up, lest in her fright she would lose her way and be carried off. It was a short-backed hen; she winked with one eye, crying, "Cluck, cluck!" What she was thinking of I can't say, but what the Peasant thought on seeing her was this: "That is the prettiest hen I have ever seen—much prettier than any of our parson's chickens. I should very much like to have her. A hen can always pick up a grain here and there—can provide for herself. I almost think it would be a good plan to take her instead of the goose. Shall we exchange?" he asked. "Exchange?" repeated the owner; "not a bad idea!" So it was done; the turnpike-man got the goose, the Peasant the hen.

He had transacted a deal of business since first starting on his way to the town. Hot was he, and wearied, too; he must have a dram and a bit of bread. He was on the point of entering an inn when the innkeeper met him in the doorway swinging a sack chock-full of something.

"What have you there?" asked the Peasant.

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"Mellow apples," was the answer, "a whole sackful for swine."

"What a quantity! Wouldn't my wife like to see so many! Why, the last year we had only one single apple on the whole tree at home. Ah! I wish my wife could see them!"

"Well, what will you give me for them?"

"Give for them? Why, I will give you my hen!" So he gave the hen, took the apples, entered the inn, and, going straight up to the bar, set his sack upright against the stove without considering that there was a fire lighted inside. A good many strangers were present, among them two Englishmen, both with their pockets full of gold and fond of laying wagers, as Englishmen in stories are wont to be.

Presently there came a sound from the stove, "Suss—suss—suss!" The apples were roasting. "What is that?" folk asked, and soon heard the whole history of the horse that had been exchanged first for a cow, and lastly for a sack of rotten apples.

"Well, won't you get a good sound cuff from your wife when you go home?" said one of the Englishmen. "Something heavy enough to fell an ox, I warn you!"

"I shall get kisses, not cuffs," replied the Peasant. "My wife will say, 'Whatever the goodman does is right.'"

"A wager!" cried the Englishmen. "For a hundred pounds?" "Say rather a bushelful," quoth the Peasant, "and I can only lay my bushel of apples with myself and the goodwife, but that will be more than full measure, I trow."

"Done!" cried they.

And the innkeeper's cart was brought out forthwith, the Englishmen got into it, the Peasant got into it, the rotten apples got into it, and away they sped to the Peasant's cottage.

"Good evening, wife."

"Same to you, goodman."

"Well, I have exchanged the horse, not sold it."

"Of course," said the wife, taking his hand and, in her eagerness to listen, noticing neither the sack nor the strangers.

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“I exchanged the horse for a cow.”

“Oh, how delightful! Now we can have milk, butter, and cheese on our table. What a capital idea!”

“Yes, but I exchanged the cow for a sheep.”

“Better and better!” cried the wife. “You are always so thoughtful; we have only just grass enough for a sheep. But now we shall have ewe’s milk, and ewe’s cheese, and woolen stockings—nay, woolen jackets, too; and a cow would not give us that; she loses all her hairs. But you are always such a clever fellow.”

“But the ewe I exchanged again for a goose.”

“What! Shall we really keep Michaelmas this year, goodman? You are always thinking of what will please me, and that was a beautiful thought. The goose can be tethered to the willow-tree and grow fat for Michaelmas Day.”

“But I gave the goose away for a hen,” said the Peasant.

“A hen? Well, that was a good exchange,” said his wife. “A hen will lay eggs, sit upon them, and we shall have chickens. Fancy! a hen-yard! That is just the thing I have always wished for most.”

“Ah, but I exchanged the hen for a sack of mellow apples.”

“Then I must give thee a kiss,” cried the wife. “Thanks, my own husband. And now I have something to tell. When you were gone I thought how I could get a right good dinner ready for you—omelets with parsley. Now I had the eggs, but not the parsley. So I went over to the schoolmaster’s; they have parsley, I know, but the woman is so crabbed, she wanted something for it. Now what could I give her? Nothing grows in our garden, not even a rotten apple; not even that had I for her; but now I can give her ten, nay, a whole sackful. That is famous, goodman!” and she kissed him again.

“Well done!” cried the Englishmen. “Always down-hill, and always happy! Such a sight is worth the money!” And so quite contentedly they paid the bushelful of gold pieces to the Peasant, who had got kisses, not cuffs, by his bargains.

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Certainly virtue is her own reward when the wife is sure that her husband is the wisest man in the world and that whatever he does is right. So now you have heard this old story that was once told to me and, I hope, have learned the moral.





XXII

THE ROSE-ELF

IN the midst of the garden grew a rose-bush which was quite covered with roses; and in one of them, the most beautiful of all, there dwelt an Elf. He was so tiny that no human eye could see him. Behind every leaf in the rose he had a bedroom. He was as well formed and beautiful as any child could be, and had wings that reached from his shoulders to his feet. Oh, what a fragrance there was in his rooms, and how clear and bright were the walls! They were made of the pale-pink rose-leaves.

The whole day he rejoiced in the warm sunshine, flew from flower to flower, danced on the wings of the flying butterfly, and measured how many steps he would have to take to pass along all the roads and cross-roads that are marked out on a single hidden leaf. What we call veins on the leaf were to him highroads and cross-roads. Yes, those were long roads for him! Before he had finished his journey the sun went down, for he had begun his work too late!

It became very cold, the dew fell, and the wind blew; now the best thing to be done was to return home. He made what haste he could, but the rose had shut itself up and he could not get in; not a single rose stood open. The poor little Elf was very much

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frightened. He had never been out at night before; he had always slumbered sweetly and comfortably behind the warm rose-leaves. Oh, it certainly would be the death of him!

At the other end of the garden there was, he knew, an arbor of fine honeysuckle. The flowers looked like great painted horns, and he wished to go down into one of them to sleep till the next day.

He flew thither. Silence! two people were in there—a handsome young man and a young girl. They sat side by side and wished that they need never part. They loved each other better than a good child loves its father and mother.

"Yet we must part!" said the young man. "Your brother does not like us, therefore he sends me away on an errand so far over mountains and seas. Farewell, my sweet bride, for that you shall be!"

And they kissed each other, and the young girl wept and gave him a rose. But before she gave it to him she impressed a kiss so firmly and closely upon it that the flower opened. Then the little Elf flew into it and leaned his head against the delicate, fragrant walls. Here he could plainly hear them say, "Farewell! farewell!" and he felt that the rose was placed on the young man's heart. Oh, how that heart beat! The little Elf could not go to sleep, it thumped so.

But not long did the rose rest undisturbed in that breast. The man took it out, and as he went lonely through the wood he kissed the flower so often and so fervently that the little Elf was almost crushed. He could feel through the leaf how the man's lips burned, and the rose itself had opened as if under the hottest noonday sun.

Then came another man, gloomy and wicked; he was the bad brother of the pretty maiden. He drew out a sharp knife, and while the other kissed the rose the bad man stabbed him to death, and then, cutting off his head, buried both head and body in the soft earth under the linden-tree.

"Now he's forgotten and gone!" thought the wicked brother; "he will never come back again. He was to have taken a long

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journey over mountains and seas. One can easily lose one's life, and he has lost his. He cannot come back again, and my sister dare not ask news of him from me."

Then with his feet he shuffled dry leaves over the loose earth and went home in the dark night. But he did not go alone, as he thought; the little Elf accompanied him. The Elf sat in a dry, rolled-up linden-leaf that had fallen on the wicked man's hair as he dug. The hat was now placed over the leaf, and it was very dark in the hat, and the Elf trembled with fear and with anger at the evil deed.

In the morning hour the bad man got home; he took off his hat and went into his sister's bedroom. There lay the beautiful blooming girl, dreaming of him whom she loved from her heart, and of whom she now believed that he was going across the mountains and through the forests. And the wicked brother bent over her and laughed hideously, as only a fiend can laugh. Then the dry leaf fell out of his hair upon the coverlet; but he did not remark it, and he went out to sleep a little himself in the morning hour. But the Elf slipped forth from the withered leaf, placed himself in the ear of the sleeping girl, and told her, as in a dream, the dreadful history of the murder; described to her the place where her brother had slain her lover and buried his corpse; told her of the blooming linden-tree close by it, and said:

"That you may not think it is only a dream that I have told you, you will find on your bed a withered leaf."

And she found it when she awoke. Oh, what bitter tears she wept! The window stood open the whole day; the little Elf could easily get out to the roses and all the other flowers, but he could not find it in his heart to quit the afflicted maiden. In the window stood a plant, a monthly rose-bush; he seated himself in one of the flowers and looked at the poor girl. Her brother often came into the room, and, in spite of his wicked deed, he always seemed cheerful; but she dared not say a word of the grief that was in her heart.

As soon as the night came she crept out of the house, went to the wood to the place where the linden-tree stood, removed

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the leaves from the ground, turned up the earth, and immediately found him who had been slain. Oh, how she wept and prayed that she might die also!

Gladly would she have taken the corpse home with her, but that she could not do. Then she took the pale head with the closed eyes, kissed the cold mouth, and shook the earth out of the beautiful hair. "That I will keep," she said. And when she had laid earth upon the dead body she took the head and a little sprig of the jasmine that bloomed in the wood where he was buried home with her.

As soon as she came into her room she brought the greatest flower-pot she could find; in this she laid the dead man's head, strewed earth upon it, and then planted the jasmine twig in the pot.

"Farewell! farewell!" whispered the little Elf; he could endure it no longer to see all this pain, and therefore flew out to his rose in the garden. But the rose was faded; only a few pale leaves clung to the wild bush.

"Alas! how soon everything good and beautiful passes away!" sighed the Elf.

At last he found another rose, and this became his house; behind its delicate, fragrant leaves he could hide himself and dwell.

Every morning he flew to the window of the poor girl, and she was always standing weeping by the flower-pot. The bitter tears fell upon the jasmine spray; and every day, as the girl became paler and paler, the twig stood there fresher and greener, and one shoot after another sprouted forth, little white buds burst out, and these she kissed. But the bad brother scolded his sister and asked if she had gone mad. He could not bear it, and could not imagine why she was always weeping over the flower-pot. He did not know what closed eyes were there, what red lips had there faded into earth. And she bowed her head upon the flower-pot, and the little Elf of the rose-bush found her slumbering there. Then he seated himself in her ear, told her of the evening in the arbor, of the fragrance of the rose, and the love of the elves. And she dreamed a marvelously sweet dream,



STANDING WEEPING BY THE FLOWER-POT

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and while she dreamed her life passed away. She had died a quiet death, and she was in heaven with him whom she loved.

And the jasmine opened its great white bells. They smelt quite peculiarly sweet; it could not weep in any other way over the dead one.

But the wicked brother looked at the beautiful blooming plant, and took it for himself as an inheritance, and put it in his sleeping-room close by his bed, for it was glorious to look upon, and its fragrance was sweet and lovely. The little Rose-elf followed and went from flower to flower—for in each dwelt a little soul—and told of the murdered young man whose head was now earth beneath the earth, and told of the evil brother and of the poor sister.

“We know it!” said each soul in the flower; “we know it; have we not sprung from the eyes and lips of the murdered man? We know it! we know it!”

And then they nodded in a strange fashion with their heads.

The Rose-elf could not at all understand how they could be so quiet, and he flew out to the bees that were gathering honey and told them the story of the wicked brother. And the bees told it to their Queen, and the Queen commanded that they should all kill the murderer next morning. But in the night—it was the first night that followed upon the sister’s death—when the brother was sleeping in his bed close to the fragrant jasmine, each flower opened, and, invisible but armed with poisonous spears, the flower-souls came out and seated themselves in his ear and told him bad dreams, and then flew across his lips and pricked his tongue with the poisonous spears.

“Now we have avenged the dead man!” they said, and flew back into the jasmine’s white bells.

When the morning came and the windows of the bedchamber were opened, the Rose-elf and the Queen Bee and the whole swarm of bees rushed in to kill him.

But he was dead already. People stood around his bed and said, “The scent of the jasmine has killed him!” Then the Rose-elf understood the revenge of the flowers, and told it to

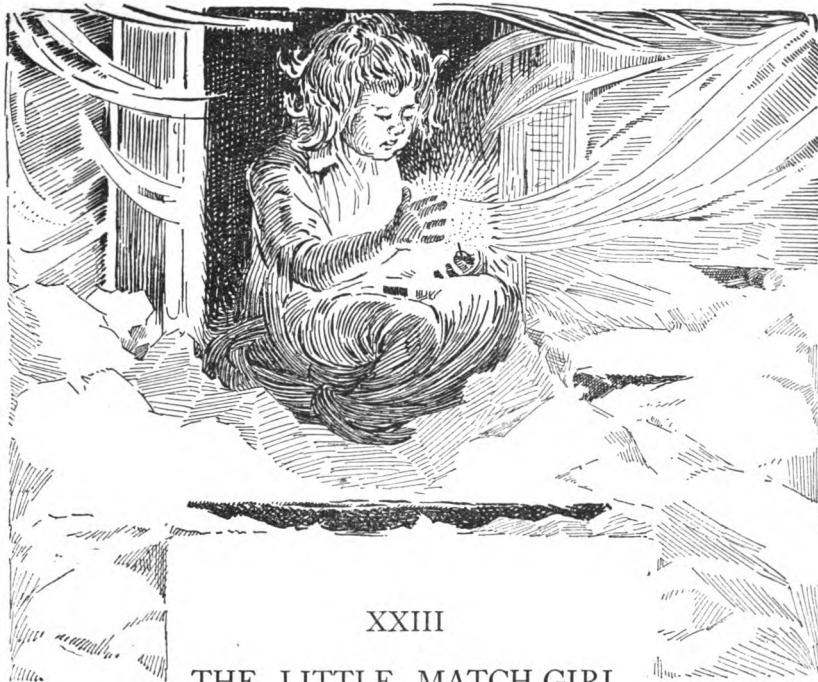
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the Queen and to the bees, and the Queen hummed with the whole swarm around the flower-pot. The bees were not to be driven away. Then a man carried away the flower-pot, and one of the bees stung him in the hand, so that he let the pot fall and it broke in pieces.

Then they beheld the whitened skull, and knew that the dead man on the bed was a murderer.

And the Queen Bee hummed in the air and sang of the revenge of the bees, and of the Rose-elf, and said that behind the smallest leaf there dwells ONE who can bring the evil to light and repay it.





XXIII

THE LITTLE MATCH-GIRL

IT was terribly cold; it snowed and was already almost dark, and evening came on, the last evening of the year. In the cold and gloom a poor little girl, bareheaded and barefoot, was walking through the streets. When she left her own house she certainly had had slippers on; but of what use were they? They were very big slippers, and her mother had used them till then, so big were they. The little maid lost them as she slipped across the road, where two carriages were rattling by terribly fast. One slipper was not to be found again, and a boy had seized the other and run away with it. He thought he could use it very well as a cradle some day when he had children of his own. So now the little girl went with her little naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. In an old apron she carried a number of matches, and a bundle of them in her hand. No one had bought anything of her all day, and no one had given her a farthing.

Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along, a picture of

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misery, poor little girl! The snowflakes covered her long fair hair, which fell in pretty curls over her neck; but she did not think of that now. In all the windows lights were shining, and there was a glorious smell of roast goose, for it was New-year's eve. Yes, she thought of that!

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sat down, cowering. She had drawn up her little feet, but she was still colder, and she did not dare to go home, for she had sold no matches and did not bring a farthing of money. From her father she would certainly receive a beating; and, besides, it was cold at home, for they had nothing over them but a roof through which the wind whistled, though the largest rents had been stopped with straw and rags.

Her little hands were almost benumbed with the cold. Ah, a match might do her good, if she could only draw one from the bundle and rub it against the wall and warm her hands at it. She drew one out. R-r-at-ch! how it sputtered and burned! It was a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, when she held her hands over it; it was a wonderful little light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great polished stove with bright brass feet and a brass cover. How the fire burned! How comfortable it was! But the little flame went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the burnt match in her hand.

— A second was rubbed against the wall. It burned up, and when the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a thin veil, and she could see through it into the room. On the table a snow-white cloth was spread; upon it stood a shining dinner service; the roast goose smoked gloriously, stuffed with apples and dried plums. And, what was still more splendid to behold, the goose hopped down from the dish and waddled along the floor, with a knife and fork in its breast, to the little girl. Then the match went out and only the thick, damp, cold wall was before her. She lighted another match. Then she was sitting under a beautiful Christmas tree; it was greater and more ornamented than the one she had seen through the

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glass door at the rich merchant's. Thousands of candles burned upon the green branches, and colored pictures like those in the print-shops looked down upon them. The little girl stretched forth her hand toward them; then the match went out. The Christmas lights mounted higher. She saw them now as stars in the sky; one of them fell down, forming a long line of fire.

"Now some one is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star fell down a soul mounted up to God.

She rubbed another match against the wall; it became bright again, and in the brightness the old grandmother stood clear and shining, mild and lovely.

"Grandmother!" cried the child. "Oh, take me with you! I know you will go when the match is burned out. You will vanish like the warm fire, the warm food, and the great, glorious Christmas tree!"

And she hastily rubbed the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to hold her grandmother fast. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than in the middle of the day; grandmother had never been so large or so beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew in brightness and joy above the earth, very, very high, and up there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor care—they were with God.

But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the poor girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. The New-year's sun rose upon a little corpse! The child sat there, stiff and cold, with the matches, of which one bundle was burned. "She wanted to warm herself," the people said. No one imagined what a beautiful thing she had seen and in what glory she had gone in with her grandmother to the New-year's day.



XXIV

THE FIR-TREE

OUT in the woods stood a nice little Fir-tree. The place he had was a very good one; the sun shone on him; as to fresh air, there was enough of that, and round him grew many large-sized comrades, pines as well as firs. But the little Fir wanted so very much to be a grown-up tree.

He did not think of the warm sun and of the fresh air; he did not care for the little cottage-children that ran about and prattled when they were in the woods looking for wild strawberries. The children often came with a whole pitcherful of berries, or a long row of them threaded on a straw, and sat down near the young Tree and said: "Oh, how pretty he is! What a nice little Fir!" But this was what the Tree could not bear to hear.

At the end of a year he had shot up a good deal, and after another year he was another long bit taller; for with fir-trees one can always tell by the shoots how many years old they are.

"Oh, were I but such a high tree as the others are!" sighed he. "Then I should be able to spread out my branches and with the tops look into the wide world! Then would the birds build nests among my branches; and when there was a breeze I could bend with as much stateliness as the others!"

Neither the sunbeams, nor the birds, nor the red clouds which

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morning and evening sailed above him gave the little Tree any pleasure.

In winter, when the snow lay glittering on the ground, a hare would often come leaping along and jump right over the little Tree. Oh, that made him so angry! But two winters were past, and in the third the Tree was so large that the hare was obliged to go round it. "To grow and grow, to get older and be tall," thought the Tree—"that, after all, is the most delightful thing in the world!"

In autumn the wood-cutters always came and felled some of the largest trees. This happened every year; and the young Fir-tree, that had now grown to a very comely size, trembled at the sight; for the magnificent great trees fell to the earth with noise and cracking, the branches were lopped off, and the trees looked long and bare; they were hardly to be recognized; and then they were laid in carts, and the horses dragged them out of the wood.

Where did they go to? What became of them?

In spring, when the Swallows and the Storks came, the Tree asked them: "Don't you know where they have been taken? Have you not met them anywhere?"

The Swallows did not know anything about it; but the Stork looked musing, nodded his head, and said: "Yes, I think I know. I met many ships as I was flying hither from Egypt; on the ships were magnificent masts, and I venture to assert that it was they that smelt so of fir. I may congratulate you, for they lifted themselves on high most majestically!"

"Oh, were I but old enough to fly across the sea! But how does the sea look in reality? What is it like?"

"That would take a long time to explain," said the Stork; and with these words off he went.

"Rejoice in thy growth!" said the Sunbeams; "rejoice in thy vigorous growth and in the fresh life that moveth within thee!"

And the Wind kissed the Tree, and the Dew wept tears over him; but the Fir understood it not.

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When Chirstmas came quite young trees were cut down; trees which often were not even as large or of the same age as this Fir-tree who could never rest, but always wanted to be off. These young trees, and they were always the finest-looking, retained their branches; they were laid on carts, and the horses drew them out of the wood.

"Where are they going to?" asked the Fir. "They are not taller than I; there was one indeed that was considerably shorter—and why do they retain all their branches? Whither are they taken?"

"We know! we know!" chirped the Sparrows. "We have peeped in at the windows in the town below! We know whither they are taken! The greatest splendor and the greatest magnificence one can imagine await them. We peeped through the windows and saw them planted in the middle of the warm room, and ornamented with the most splendid things—with gilded apples, with gingerbread, with toys and many hundred lights!"

"And then?" asked the Fir-tree, trembling in every bough. "And then? What happens then?"

"We did not see anything more; it was incomparably beautiful."

"I would fain know if I am destined for so glorious a career," cried the Tree, rejoicing. "That is still better than to cross the sea! What a longing do I suffer! Were Christmas but come! I am now tall, and my branches spread like the others that were carried off last year! Oh, were I but already on the cart! Were I in the warm room with all the splendor and magnificence! Yes; then something better, something still grander, will surely follow, or wherefore should they thus ornament me? Something better, something still grander, *must* follow—but what? Oh, how I long, how I suffer! I do not know myself what is the matter with me!"

"Rejoice in our presence!" said the Air and the Sunlight; "rejoice in thy own fresh youth!"

But the Tree did not rejoice at all; he grew and grew, and was green both winter and summer. People that saw him said,

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“What a fine tree!” and toward Christmas he was one of the first that was cut down. The ax struck deep into the very pith; the tree fell to the earth with a sigh; he felt a pang—it was like a swoon; he could not think of happiness, for he was sorrowful at being separated from his home, from the place where he had sprung up. He well knew that he should never see his dear old comrades, the little bushes and flowers around him, any more; perhaps not even the birds! The departure was not at all agreeable.

The Tree only came to himself when he was unloaded in a courtyard with the other trees, and heard a man say: “That one is splendid; we don’t want the others.” Then two servants came in rich livery and carried the Fir-tree into a large and splendid drawing-room. Portraits were hanging on the walls, and near the white porcelain stove stood two large Chinese vases with lions on the covers. There, too, were large easy-chairs, silken sofas, large tables full of picture-books and full of toys worth hundreds and hundreds of crowns—at least the children said so. And the Fir-tree was stuck upright in a cask that was filled with sand; but no one could see that it was a cask, for green cloth was hung all around it, and it stood on a large, gaily colored carpet. Oh, how the tree quivered! What was to happen? The servants as well as the young ladies decorated it. On one branch there hung little nets cut out of colored paper, and each net was filled with sugar-plums; and among the other boughs gilded apples and walnuts were suspended, looking as though they had grown there, and little blue and white tapers were placed among the leaves. Dolls that looked for all the world like men—the Tree had never beheld such before—were seen among the foliage, and at the very top a large star of gold tinsel was fixed. It was really splendid—beyond description splendid.

“This evening!” said they all; “how it will shine this evening!”

“Oh,” thought the Tree, “if the evening were but come! If the tapers were but lighted! And then I wonder what will happen! Perhaps the other trees from the forest will come to

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look at me! Perhaps the sparrows will beat against the windowpanes! I wonder if I shall take root here and winter and summer stand covered with ornaments!"

He knew very much about the matter! But he was so impatient that for sheer longing he got a pain in his back, and this with trees is the same thing as a headache with us.

The candles were now lighted. What brightness! What splendor! The Tree trembled so in every bough that one of the tapers set fire to the foliage. It blazed up splendidly.

"Help! help!" cried the young ladies, and they quickly put out the fire.

Now the Tree did not even dare tremble. What a state he was in! He was so uneasy lest he should lose something of his splendor that he was quite bewildered amid the glare and brightness, when suddenly both folding-doors opened and a troop of children rushed in as if they would upset the Tree. The older persons followed quietly; the little ones stood quite still. But it was only for a moment; then they shouted so that the whole place re-echoed with their rejoicing; they danced round the Tree, and one present after the other was pulled off.

"What are they about?" thought the Tree. "What is to happen now?" And the lights burned down to the very branches, and as they burned down they were put out one after the other, and then the children had permission to plunder the Tree. So they fell upon it with such violence that all its branches cracked; if it had not been fixed firmly in the cask it would certainly have tumbled down.

The children danced about with their beautiful playthings; no one looked at the Tree except the old nurse, who peeped between the branches; but it was only to see if there was a fig or an apple left that had been forgotten.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, drawing a little fat man toward the Tree. He seated himself under it and said: "Now we are in the shade, and the Tree can listen too. But I shall tell only one story. Now which will you have; that about Ivedy-Avedy, or about Klumpy-Dumpy who tumbled down-



“NOW WE WILL HAVE A STORY, AND THE TREE CAN
LISTEN TOO”

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stairs, and yet after all came to the throne and married the princess?"

"Ivedy-Avedy," cried some; "Klumpy-Dumpy," cried the others. There was such a bawling and screaming—the Fir-tree alone was silent, and he thought to himself, "Am I not to bawl with the rest—am I to do nothing whatever?" for he was one of the company and had done what he had to do.

And the man told about Klumpy-Dumpy that tumbled down, who notwithstanding came to the throne and at last married the princess. And the children clapped their hand and cried out, "Oh, go on! Do go on!" They wanted to hear about Ivedy-Avedy, too, but the little man only told them about Klumpy-Dumpy. The Fir-tree stood quite still and absorbed in thought; the birds in the wood had never related the like of this. "Klumpy-Dumpy fell down-stairs, and yet he married the princess! Yes, yes! that's the way of the world!" thought the Fir-tree, and believed it all, because the man who told the story was so good-looking. "Well, well! who knows, perhaps I may fall down-stairs, too, and get a princess as wife!" And he looked forward with joy to the morrow, when he hoped to be decked out again with lights, playthings, fruits, and tinsel.

"I won't tremble to-morrow!" thought the Fir-tree. "I will enjoy to the full all my splendor! To-morrow I shall hear again the story of Klumpy-Dumpy, and perhaps that of Ivedy-Avedy, too." And the whole night the Tree stood still and in deep thought.

In the morning the servant and the housemaid came in.

"Now, then, the splendor will begin again," thought the Fir. But they dragged him out of the room, and up the stairs into the loft; and here in a dark corner, where no daylight could enter, they left him. "What's the meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear now, I wonder?" And he leaned against the wall, lost in reverie. Time enough had he, too, for his reflections, for days and nights passed on, and nobody came up; and when at last somebody did come it was only to put some great trunks in a corner out of the way.

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There stood the Tree, quite hidden; it seemed as if he had been entirely forgotten.

“‘Tis now winter out-of-doors!” thought the Tree. “The earth is hard and covered with snow; men cannot plant me now, and therefore I have been put up here under shelter till the springtime comes! How thoughtful that is! How kind man is, after all! If it only were not so dark here and so terribly lonely! Not even a hare. And out in the woods it was so pleasant when the snow was on the ground, and the hare leaped by; yes—even when he jumped over me; but I did not like it then. It is really terribly lonely here!”

“Squeak! squeak!” said a little Mouse, at the same moment peeping out of his hole. And then another little one came.

They snuffed about the Fir-tree and rustled among the branches.

“It is dreadfully cold,” said the Mouse. “But for that it would be delightful here, old Fir, wouldn’t it?”

“I am by no means old,” said the Fir-tree. “There’s many a one considerably older than I am.”

“Where do you come from,” asked the Mice, “and what can you do?” They were so extremely curious. “Tell us about the most beautiful spot on the earth. Have you never been there? Were you never in the larder where cheeses lie on the shelves and hams hang from above, where one dances about on tallow candles; that place where one enters lean and comes out again fat and portly?”

“I know no such place,” said the Tree. “But I know the wood, where the sun shines, and where the little birds sing.” And then he told all about his youth; and the little Mice had never heard the like before; and they listened and said:

“Well, to be sure! How much you have seen! How happy you must have been!”

“I!” said the Fir-tree, thinking over what he had himself related. “Yes, in reality those were happy times.” And then he told about Christmas eve, when he was decked out with cakes and candles.

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"Oh," said the little Mice, "how fortunate you have been, old Fir-tree!"

"I am by no means old," said he. "I came from the wood this winter; I am in my prime, and am only rather short for my age."

"What delightful stories you know!" said the Mice; and the next night they came with four other little Mice, who were to hear what the Tree recounted; and the more he related the more plainly he remembered all himself; and it appeared as if those times had really been happy times. "But they may still come—they may still come. Klumpy-Dumpy fell down-stairs, and yet he got a princess!" and he thought at the moment of a nice little Birch-tree growing out in the wood; to the Fir that would be a real charming princess.

"Who is Klumpy-Dumpy?" asked the Mice. So then the Fir-tree told the whole fairy tale, for he could remember every



single word of it; and the little Mice jumped for joy up to the very top of the Tree. Next night two more Mice came, and on Sunday two Rats, even; but they said the stories were not interesting, which vexed the little Mice; and they, too, now began to think them not so very amusing, either.

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"Do you know only one story?" asked the Rats.

"Only that one," answered the Tree. "I heard it on my happiest evening; but I did not then know how happy I was."

"It is a very stupid story! Don't you know one about bacon and tallow candles? Can't you tell any larder-stories?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Then good-by," said the Rats; and they went home.

At last the little Mice stayed away also; and the Tree sighed. "After all, it was very pleasant when the sleek little Mice sat round me and listened to what I told them. Now that, too, is over. But I will take good care to enjoy myself when I am brought out again."

But when was that to be? Why, one morning there came a quantity of people and set to work in the loft. The trunks were moved, the tree was pulled out and thrown—rather hard, it is true—down on the floor, but a man drew him toward the stairs, where the daylight shone.

"Now a merry life will begin again," thought the Tree. He felt the fresh air, the first sunbeam—and now he was out in the courtyard. All passed so quickly, there was so much going on around him, that the Tree quite forgot to look to himself. The court adjoined a garden, and all was in flower; the roses hung so fresh and odorous over the balustrade, the lindens were in blossom, the Swallows flew by and said, "Quirre-vit! my husband is come!" but it was not the Fir-tree that they meant.

"Now, then, I shall really enjoy life," said he, exultingly, and spread out his branches; but, alas! they were all withered and yellow. It was in a corner that he lay, among weeds and nettles. The golden star of tinsel was still on the top of the Tree, and glittered in the sunshine.

In the courtyard some of the merry children were playing who had danced at Christmas round the Fir-tree and were so glad at the sight of him. One of the youngest ran and tore off the golden star.

"Only look what is still on the ugly old Christmas tree!" said

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he, trampling on the branches so that they all cracked beneath his feet.

And the Tree beheld all the beauty of the flowers and the freshness in the garden; he beheld himself and wished he had remained in his dark corner in the loft; he thought of his first youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas eve, and of the little Mice who had listened with so much pleasure to the story of Klumpy-Dumpy.

“‘Tis over! ‘tis past!” said the poor Tree. “Had I but rejoiced when I had reason to do so! But now ‘tis past, ‘tis past!”

And the gardener’s boy chopped the Tree into small pieces; there was a whole heap lying there. The wood flamed up splendidly under the large brewing copper, and it sighed so deeply! Each sigh was like a shot.

The boys played about in the court, and the youngest wore the gold star on his breast which the Tree had had on the happiest evening of his life. However, that was over now—the Tree gone, the story at an end. All, all was over; every tale must end at last.





XXV

THUMBLING

THREE was once a woman who wished for a very little child, but she did not know where she should get one. So she went to an old Witch and said:

“I do so very much wish for a little child. Can you not tell me where I can get one?”

“Oh, that’s easily managed,” said the Witch. “Here is a barleycorn; it is not of the kind which grows in the countryman’s field and which the chickens get to eat. Put that into a flower-pot and you shall see what you shall see.”

“Thank you,” said the Woman; and she gave the Witch twelve skillings, went home and planted the barleycorn, and immediately there grew up a great handsome flower which looked like a tulip; but the leaves were tightly closed, as though it were still a bud.

“That is a beautiful flower,” said the Woman; and she kissed its yellow and red leaves; and as she kissed it the flower gave a loud snap and opened. It was a real tulip, as one could now see; but in the middle of the flower there sat upon the green velvet stamens a little maiden, delicate and graceful to behold. She was scarcely half a thumb’s length in height, and therefore she was called Thumbling.

A neat polished walnut-shell served Thumbling for a cradle,

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blue violet-leaves were her mattresses, with a rose-leaf for a coverlet. There she slept at night; but in the daytime she played upon the table, where the woman had put a plate with a wreath of flowers around it whose stalks stood in water; on the water swam a great tulip-leaf, and on this the little maiden could sit and row from one side of the plate to the other with two white horse-hairs for oars. That looked pretty indeed! She could also sing, and, indeed, so delicately and sweetly that the like had never before been heard.

Once, as she lay at night in her pretty bed, there came an old Toad creeping through the window in which one pane was broken. The Toad was very ugly, big, and damp; it hopped straight down upon the table where Thumbling lay sleeping under the rose-leaf.

"That would be a handsome wife for my son," said the Toad, and she took up the walnut-shell in which Thumbling lay asleep, and hopped with it through the window down into the garden.

There ran a great broad brook; but the margin was swampy and soft, and here the Toad dwelt with her son. Ugh! he was ugly, and looked as old as his mother. "Croak! croak! brek-kek-kex!" that was all he could say when he saw the graceful little maiden in the walnut-shell.

"Don't speak so loud, or she will awake," said the old Toad. "She might run away from us, for she is as light as a bit of swan's-down. We will put her out in the brook upon one of the broad water-lily leaves. That will be just like an island for her, she is so small and light. Then she can't get away while we put the state-room under the marsh in order, where you are to live and keep house together."

Out in the brook there grew many water-lilies with broad, green leaves, which looked as if they were floating on the water. The leaf which lay farthest out was also the greatest of all, and to that the old Toad swam out, and laid the walnut-shell upon it with Thumbling. The poor little unfortunate woke early in the morning, and when she saw where she was she began to cry very bitterly; for there was water on every side of the great

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green leaf, and she could not get to land at all. The old Toad sat down in the marsh, decking out her room with rushes and yellow weed—it was to be made very pretty for the new daughter-in-law; then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf on which Thumbling was. They wanted to take her pretty bed which was to be put in the bridal chamber before she went in there herself. The old Toad bowed low before her and said: "Here is my son; he will be your husband, and you will live splendidly together in the marsh."

"Croak! croak! brek-kek-kex!" That was all the son could say.

They took the delicate little bed and swam away with it; but Thumbling sat all alone upon the green leaf and wept, for she did not like to live at the nasty Toad's and have her ugly son for a husband. The little fishes swimming in the water below had both seen the Toad and had also heard what she said; therefore they stretched forth their heads, for they wanted to see the little girl. So soon as they saw her they thought her so pretty that they felt very sorry she should have to go down to the ugly Toad. No, that must never be! They got together in the water around the green stalk which held the leaf upon which the little maiden stood, and with their teeth they gnawed away the stalk, and so the leaf swam down the stream; and away went Thumbling, far away, where the Toad could not get at her.

Thumbling sailed past many cities, and the little birds which sat in the bushes saw her and said, "What a lovely little girl!" The leaf swam away with them, farther and farther; so Thumbling traveled out of the country.

A graceful little white Butterfly always fluttered round her, and at last alighted upon the leaf. Thumbling pleased him, and she was very glad of this, for now the Toad could not reach them; and it was so beautiful where she was floating along—the sun shone upon the water, and the water glistened like the most splendid gold. She took her girdle and bound one end of it round the Butterfly, fastening the other end of the ribbon to the leaf. The leaf now glided on much faster, and Thumbling, too, for she stood upon the leaf.



THE LEAF NOW GLIDED ON MUCH FASTER

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There came a big May-bug flying up; and he saw her and immediately clasped his claws round her slender waist and flew with her into a tree. The green leaf was swimming down the brook, and the Butterfly with it; for he was fastened to the leaf and could not get away from it.

Mercy! how frightened poor little Thumbling was when the May-bug flew with her up into the tree! But especially she was sorry for the fine white Butterfly whom she had bound fast to the leaf, for if he could not free himself from it he would be obliged to starve. The May-bug, however, did not trouble himself at all about this. He seated himself with her upon the biggest green leaf of the tree, gave her the sweet part of the flowers to eat, and declared that she was very pretty, though she did not in the least resemble a May-bug. Afterward came all the May-bugs who lived in the tree to pay a visit; they looked at Thumbling and said:

“Why, she has not even more than two legs! that has a wretched appearance.”

“She has not any feelers!” cried another.

“Her waist is quite slender—fie! she looks like a human creature—how ugly she is!” said all the lady May-bugs.

And yet Thumbling was very pretty. Even the May-bug who had carried her off saw that; but when all the others declared she was ugly, he believed it at last, and would not have her at all—she might go whither she liked. Then they flew down with her from the tree and set her upon a daisy, and she wept, because she was so ugly that the May-bugs would have nothing to say to her; and yet she was the loveliest little being one could imagine, and as tender and delicate as a rose-leaf.

The whole summer through poor Thumbling lived quite alone in the great wood. She wove herself a bed out of blades of grass, and hung it up under a shamrock, so that she was protected from the rain; she plucked the honey out of the flowers for food, and drank of the dew which stood every morning upon the leaves. Thus summer and autumn passed away; but now came winter, the cold, long winter. All the birds who had sung so sweetly

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before her flew away; trees and flowers shed their leaves; the great shamrock under which she had lived shriveled up, and there remained nothing of it but a yellow, withered stalk; and she was dreadfully cold, for her clothes were torn, and she herself was so frail and delicate—poor little Thumbling! she was nearly frozen. It began to snow, and every snowflake that fell upon her was like a whole shovelful thrown upon one of us, for we are tall, and she was only an inch long. Then she wrapped herself in a dry leaf, and that tore in the middle and would not warm her—she shivered with cold.

Close to the wood into which she had now come lay a great corn-field, but the corn was gone long ago; only the naked, dry stubble stood up out of the frozen ground. These were just like a great forest for her to wander through; and oh, how she trembled with cold! Then she arrived at the door of the Field-mouse. This mouse had a little hole under the stubble. There the Field-mouse lived, warm and comfortable, and had a whole roomful of corn—a glorious kitchen and larder. Poor Thumbling stood at the door just like a poor beggar-girl and begged for a little bit of a barleycorn, for she had not had the smallest morsel to eat for the last two days.

“You poor little creature,” said the Field-mouse—for after all she was a good old Field-mouse—“come into my warm room and dine with me.”

As she was pleased with Thumbling, she said, “If you like, you may stay with me through the winter, but you must keep my room clean and neat and tell me pretty little stories, because I am very fond of hearing those.”

And Thumbling did as the kind old Field-mouse bade her, and had a very good time of it.

“Now we shall soon have a visitor,” said the Field-mouse. “My neighbor is in the habit of visiting me once a week. He is even better off than I am, has great rooms, and a beautiful black, velvety fur. If you could only get him for your husband you would be well provided for. You must tell him the prettiest stories you know.”



THUMBLING STOOD AT THE DOOR AND BEGGED FOR
A BIT OF BARLEYCORN. "YOU POOR LITTLE CREA-
TURE," SAID THE FIELD-MOUSE

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But Thumbling did not care about this; she thought nothing of the neighbor, for he was a Mole. He came and paid his visit in his black velvet coat. The Field-mouse told how rich and how learned he was and how his house was more than twenty times larger than hers; that he had learning, but that he did not like the sun and beautiful flowers, for he had never seen them.

Thumbling had to sing, and she sang, "Lady-bug, lady-bug, fly away home," and "When the parson goes afield." Then the Mole fell in love with her because of her delicious voice; but he said nothing, for he was a very sedate person.

A short time before he had dug a long passage through the earth from his own house to theirs; and Thumbling and the Field-mouse obtained leave to walk in this passage as much as they wished. But he begged them not to be afraid of the dead bird which was lying in the passage. It was an entire bird, with wings and a beak. It certainly must have died only a short time before, and was now buried just where the Mole had made his passage.

The Mole took a bit of decayed wood in his mouth, and it glimmered like fire in the dark; and then he went first and lighted them through the long, dark passage. When they came where the dead bird lay, the Mole thrust up his broad nose against the ceiling so that a great hole was made, through which the daylight could shine down. In the middle of the floor lay a dead swallow, his beautiful wings pressed close against his sides, and his head and feet drawn back under his feathers; the poor bird had certainly died of cold. Thumbling was very sorry for this; she was very fond of all the little birds who had sung and twittered so prettily before her through the summer; but the Mole gave him a push with his crooked legs and said: "Now he doesn't pipe any more. It must be miserable to be born a little bird. I'm thankful that none of my children can be that; such a bird has nothing but his 'tweet-weet,' and has to starve in the winter!"

"Yes, you may well say that, as a clever man," observed the Mouse. "Of what use is all this 'tweet-weet' to a bird

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when the winter comes? He must starve and freeze. But they say that's aristocratic."

Thumbling said nothing; but when the two others turned their backs on the bird she bent down, put the feathers aside which covered his head, and kissed him upon his closed eyes.

"Perhaps it was he who sang so prettily before me in the summer," she thought. "How much pleasure he gave me, the dear, beautiful bird!"

The Mole now closed up the hole through which the daylight shone in and accompanied the ladies home. But at night Thumbling could not sleep at all; so she got up out of her bed and wove a large, beautiful carpet of hay and carried it and spread it over the dead bird, and laid the thin stamens of flowers, soft as cotton, which she had found in the Field-mouse's room, at the bird's sides so that he might lie soft in the ground.

"Farewell, you pretty little bird!" said she. "Farewell! and thanks to you for your beautiful song in the summer when all the trees were green and the sun shone down warmly upon us." And then she laid the bird's head upon her heart. But the bird was not dead; he was only lying there torpid with cold; and now he had been warmed and came to life again.

In autumn all the swallows fly away to warm countries; but if one happens to be belated it becomes so cold that it falls down as if dead, and lies where it fell, and then the cold snow covers it.

Thumbling fairly trembled, she was so startled; for the bird was large, very large, compared with her, who was only an inch in height. But she took courage, laid the cotton closer round the poor bird, and brought a leaf that she had used as her own coverlet and laid it over the bird's head.

The next night she crept out to him again—and now he was alive, but quite weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment and look at Thumbling, who stood before him with a bit of decayed wood in her hand, for she had not a lantern.

"I thank you, you pretty little child," said the sick Swallow; "I have been nicely warmed. Soon I shall get my strength back again, and I shall be able to fly about in the warm sunshine."

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“Oh,” she said, “it is so cold without. It snows and freezes. Stay in your warm bed, and I will nurse you.”

Then she brought the Swallow water in the petal of a flower; and the Swallow drank, and told her how he had torn one of his wings in a thorn-bush, and thus had not been able to fly so fast as the other swallows, which had sped away, far away, to the warm countries. So at last he had fallen to the ground, but he could remember nothing more, and did not know at all how he had come where she had found him.

The whole winter the Swallow remained there, and Thumbling nursed and tended him heartily. Neither the Field-mouse nor the Mole heard anything about it, for they did not like the poor Swallow. So soon as the spring came and the sun warmed the earth the Swallow bade Thumbling farewell, and she opened the hole which the Mole had made in the ceiling. The sun shone in upon them gloriously, and the Swallow asked if Thumbling would go with him; she could sit upon his back, and they would fly away far into the green wood. But Thumbling knew that the old Field-mouse would be grieved if she left her.

“No, I cannot!” said Thumbling.

“Farewell, farewell, you good, pretty girl!” said the Swallow; and he flew out in the sunshine. Thumbling looked after him, and the tears came into her eyes, for she was heartily and sincerely fond of the poor Swallow.

“Tweet-weet! tweet-weet!” said the bird, and flew into the green forest. Thumbling felt very sad. She did not get permission to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn which was sown in the field over the house of the Field-mouse grew up high into the air; it was quite a thick wood for the poor girl, who was only an inch in height.

“You are betrothed now, Thumbling,” said the Field-mouse. “My neighbor has proposed for you. What great fortune for a poor child like you! Now you must work at your outfit, woolen and linen clothes both; for you must lack nothing when you become the Mole’s wife.”

Thumbling had to turn the spindle, and the Mole hired four

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spiders to weave for her day and night. Every evening the Mole paid her a visit; and he was always saying that when the summer should draw to a close the sun would not shine nearly so hot, for that now it burned the earth almost as hard as a stone. Yes, when the summer should have gone, then he would keep his wedding-day with Thumbling. But she was not glad at all, for she did not like the tiresome Mole. Every morning when the sun rose, and every evening when it went down, she crept out at the door; and when the wind blew the corn-ears apart so that she could see the blue sky she thought how bright and beautiful it was out here and wished heartily to see her dear Swallow again. But the Swallow did not come back; he had doubtless flown far away in the fair, green forest. When autumn came on Thumbling had all her outfit ready.

"In four weeks you shall celebrate your wedding," said the Field-mouse to her.

But Thumbling wept and declared she would not have the tiresome Mole.

"Nonsense," said the Field-mouse; "don't be obstinate, or I will bite you with my white teeth. He is a very fine man whom you will marry. The Queen herself has not such a black velvet fur; and his kitchen is full. Be thankful for your good fortune."

Now the wedding was to be held. The Mole had already come to fetch Thumbling; she was to live with him deep under the earth, and never to come out into the warm sunshine, for that he did not like. The poor little thing was very sorrowful; she was now to say farewell to the glorious sun, which, after all, she had been allowed by the Field-mouse to see from the threshold of the door.

"Farewell, thou bright sun!" she said, and stretched out her arms toward it and walked a little way forth from the house of the Field-mouse, for now the corn had been reaped and only the dry stubble stood in the fields. "Farewell!" she repeated, twining her arms round a little red flower which still bloomed there. "Greet the Swallow from me if you see him again."

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“Tweet-weet! tweet-weet!” a voice sounded suddenly over her head. She looked up; it was the little Swallow, who was just flying by. When he saw Thumbling he was very glad; and she told him how loath she was to have the ugly Mole for her husband, and that she was to live deep under the earth where the sun never shone. And she could not refrain from weeping.

“The cold weather is coming now,” said the Swallow; “I am going to fly far away into the warm countries. Will you come with me? You can sit upon my back; then we shall fly from the ugly Mole and his dark room—away, far away, over the mountains to the warm countries, where the sun shines warmer than here, where it is always summer and there are lovely flowers. Only fly with me, you dear little Thumbling, you who have saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark, earthy passage.”



“Yes, I will go with you!” said Thumbling; and she seated herself on the bird's back, with her feet on his outspread wing, and bound her girdle fast to one of his strongest feathers; then the Swallow flew up into the air over forest and over sea, high up over the great mountains where the snow always lies; and Thumbling felt cold in the bleak air, but then she hid under the bird's warm feathers and only put out her little head to admire all the beauties beneath her.

At last they came to the warm countries. There the sun shone far brighter than here; the sky seemed twice as high;

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in ditches and on the hedges grew the most beautiful blue and green grapes; lemons and oranges hung in the woods; the air was fragrant with myrtles and balsams, and on the roads the loveliest children ran about playing with the gay butterflies. But the Swallow flew still farther, and it became more and more beautiful. Under the most glorious green trees by the blue lake stood a palace of dazzling white marble from the olden time. Vines clustered all around the lofty pillars; at the top were many swallows' nests, and in one of these the Swallow lived who carried Thumbling.

"That is my house," said the Swallow; "but it is not right that you should live there. It is not yet properly arranged by a great deal, and you will not be content with it. Select for yourself one of the splendid flowers which grow down yonder, then I will put you into it, and you shall have everything as nice as you can wish."

"This is delightful," cried she, clapping her hands.

A great marble pillar lay there which had fallen to the ground and had been broken into three pieces; but between these pieces grew the most beautiful great white flowers. The Swallow flew down with Thumbling and set her upon one of the broad leaves. But what was the little maid's surprise? There sat a little man in the midst of the flower, as white and transparent as if he had been made of glass; he wore the neatest of gold crowns on his head and the brightest of wings on his shoulders; he himself was not bigger than Thumbling. He was the angel of the flower. In each of the flowers dwelt such a little man or woman, but this one was King over them all.

"Heavens! how beautiful he is!" whispered Thumbling to the Swallow.

The little Prince was very much frightened at the Swallow; for it was quite a gigantic bird to him, who was so small. But when he saw Thumbling he became very glad; she was the prettiest maiden he had ever seen. Therefore he took off his golden crown and put it upon her and asked her name, and if she would be his wife, and then she should be Queen of all the

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flowers. Now this was truly a different kind of man to the son of the Toad, and the Mole with the black velvet fur. She therefore said "Yes" to the charming Prince. And out of every flower came a lady or a lord, so pretty to behold that it was a delight; each one brought Thumbling a present; but the best gift was a pair of beautiful wings which had belonged to a great white fly; these were fastened to Thumbling's back, and now she could fly from flower to flower. Then there was much rejoicing; and the little Swallow sat above them in his nest, and was to sing the marriage song, which he accordingly did as well as he could; but yet in his heart he was sad, for he was so fond, oh! so fond of Thumbling, and would have liked never to part from her.

"You shall not be called Thumbling," said the Flower Angel to her; "that is an ugly name, and you are too fair for it; we will call you Maia."

"Farewell, farewell!" said the little Swallow, with a heavy heart; and he flew away again from the warm countries, far away back to Denmark. There he had a little nest over the window of the man who can tell fairy tales. Before him he sang, "Tweet-weet! tweet-weet!" and from him we have the whole story.





XXVI

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

MANY years ago there lived an Emperor who was so excessively fond of grand new clothes that he spent all his money upon them that he might be very fine. He did not care about his soldiers, nor about the theater, and only liked to drive out and show his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and just as they say of a king, "He is in council," so they always said of him, "The Emperor is in the wardrobe."

In the great city in which he lived it was always very merry; every day came many strangers; one day two rogues came; they gave themselves out as weavers and declared they could weave the finest stuff any one could imagine. Not only were their colors and patterns, they said, uncommonly beautiful, but the clothes made of the stuff possessed the wonderful quality that they became invisible to any one who was unfit for the office he held or was incorrigibly stupid.

"Those would be capital clothes!" thought the Emperor. "If I wore those I should be able to find out what men in my empire are not fit for the places they have; I could tell the

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clever from the dunces. Yes, the stuff must be woven for me directly!"

And he gave the two rogues a great deal of cash in hand that they might begin their work at once.

As for them, they put up two looms and pretended to be working; but they had nothing at all on their looms. They at once demanded the finest silk and the costliest gold; this they put into their own pockets and worked at the empty looms till late into the night.

"I should like to know how far they have got on with the stuff," thought the Emperor. But he felt quite uncomfortable when he thought that those who were not fit for their offices could not see it. He believed, indeed, that he had nothing to fear for himself, but yet he preferred first to send some one else to see how matters stood. All the people in the city knew what peculiar power the stuff possessed, and all were anxious to see how bad or how stupid their neighbors were.

"I will send my honest old Minister to the weavers," thought the Emperor. "He can judge best how the stuff looks, for he has sense, and no one understands his office better than he."

Now the good old Minister went out into the hall where the two rogues sat working at the empty looms.

"Mercy on us!" thought the old Minister, and he opened his eyes wide. "I cannot see anything at all!" But he did not say this.

Both the rogues begged him to be so good as to come nearer, and asked if he did not approve of the colors and the pattern. Then they pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old Minister went on opening his eyes; but he could see nothing, for there was nothing to see.

"Mercy!" thought he, "can I indeed be so stupid? I never thought that, and not a soul must know it. Am I not fit for my office? No, it will never do for me to tell that I could not see the stuff."

"Don't you say anything to it?" asked one, as he went on weaving.

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"Oh, it is charming—quite enchanting!" answered the old Minister, as he peered through his spectacles. "What a fine pattern, and what colors! Yes, I shall tell the Emperor that I am very much pleased with it."

"Well, we are glad of that," said both the weavers; and then they named the colors and explained the strange pattern. The old Minister listened attentively, that he might be able to repeat it when the Emperor came. And he did so.

Now the rogues asked for more money, and silk and gold which they declared they wanted for weaving. They put all into their own pockets, and not a thread was put upon the loom; they continued to work at the empty frames as before.

The Emperor soon sent again, despatching another honest officer of the court to see how the weaving was going on and if the stuff would soon be ready. He fared just like the first: he looked and looked, but, as there was nothing to be seen but the empty looms, he could see nothing.

"Is not that a pretty piece of stuff?" asked the two rogues; and they displayed and explained the handsome pattern which was not there at all.

"I am not stupid!" thought the man; "it must be my good office for which I am not fit. It is funny enough, but I must not let it be noticed." And so he praised the stuff which he did not see, and expressed his pleasure at the beautiful colors and charming pattern. "Yes, it is enchanting," he told the Emperor.

All the people in the town were talking of the gorgeous stuff. The Emperor wished to see it himself while it was still upon the loom. With a whole crowd of chosen men, among whom were also the two honest statesmen who had already been there, he went to the two cunning rogues, who were now weaving with might and main without fiber or thread.

"Is not that splendid?" said the two statesmen, who had already been there once. "Does not your Majesty remark the pattern and the colors?" And they pointed to the empty loom, for they thought that the others could see the stuff.

"What's this?" thought the Emperor. "I can see nothing at

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all! That is terrible. Am I stupid? Am I not fit to be Emperor? That would be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me. Oh, it is *very* pretty!" he said aloud. "It has our highest approbation." And he nodded in a contented way and gazed at the empty loom, for he would not say that he saw nothing. The whole suite whom he had with him looked and looked and saw nothing any more than the rest; but, like the Emperor, they said, "That *is* pretty!" and counseled him to wear the splendid new clothes for the first time at the great procession that was presently to take place. "It is splendid, excellent!" went from mouth to mouth. On all sides there seemed to be general rejoicing, and the Emperor gave the rogues the title of Imperial Court Weavers.

The whole night before the morning on which the procession was to take place the rogues were up, and kept more than sixteen candles burning. The people could see that they were hard at work completing the Emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the stuff down from the looms; they made cuts in the air with great scissors; they sewed with needles without thread; and at last they said, "Now the clothes are ready!"

The Emperor came himself with his noblest cavaliers; and the two rogues lifted up one arm as if they were holding something and said: "See, here are the trousers! here is the coat! here is the cloak!" and so on. "It is as light as a spider's web; one would think one had nothing on; but that is just the beauty of it."

"Yes," said all the cavaliers; but they could not see anything, for nothing was there.

"Will your Imperial Majesty please to condescend to take off your clothes?" said the rogues; "then we will put on you the new clothes here in front of the great mirror."

The Emperor took off his clothes, and the rogues pretended to put on him each new garment as it was ready; and the Emperor turned round and round before the mirror.

"Oh, how well they look! how capitally they fit!" said all. "What a pattern! what colors! That *is* a splendid dress!"

"They are standing outside with the canopy which is to be

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borne above your Majesty in the procession!" announced the Head Master of the Ceremonies.

"Well, I am ready," replied the Emperor. "Does it not suit me well?" And then he turned again to the mirror, for he wanted it to appear as if he contemplated his adornment with great interest.

The two chamberlains who were to carry the train stooped down with their hands toward the floor, just as if they were picking up the mantle; then they pretended to be holding something in the air. They did not dare to let it be noticed that they saw nothing.

So the Emperor went in procession under the rich canopy, and every one in the streets said: "How incomparable are the Emperor's new clothes! what a train he has to his mantle! how it fits him!" No one would let it be perceived that he could see nothing, for that would have shown that he was not fit for his office or was very stupid. No clothes of the Emperor's had ever had such a success as these.

"But he has nothing on!" a little child cried out at last.

"Just hear what that innocent says!" said the father; and one whispered to another what the child had said.

"But he has nothing on!" said the whole people at length. That touched the Emperor, for it seemed to him that they were right; but he thought within himself, "I must go through with the procession." And so he held himself a little higher, and the chamberlains held on tighter than ever, and carried the train which did not exist at all.





XXVII

THE DARNING-NEEDLE

THREE was once a darning-needle who thought herself so fine she imagined she was an embroidering-needle.

"Take care, and mind you hold me tight!" she said to the Fingers that took her out. "Don't let me fall! If I fall on the ground I shall certainly never be found again, for I am so fine!"

"That's as it may be," said the Fingers; and they grasped her round the body.

"See, I'm coming with a train!" said the Darning-needle; and she drew a long thread after her, but there was no knot in the thread.

The Fingers pointed the needle just at the cook's slipper, in which the upper leather had burst and was to be sewn together.

"That's vulgar work," said the Darning-needle. "I shall never get through. I'm breaking! I'm breaking!" And she really broke. "Did I not say so?" said the Darning-needle. "I'm too fine!"

"Now it's quite useless," said the Fingers; but they were obliged to hold her fast, all the same; for the cook dropped some sealing-wax upon the needle and pinned her handkerchief together with it in front.

"So, now I'm a breastpin!" said the Darning-needle. "I knew very well that I should come to honor; when one is something one comes to something!"

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And she laughed quietly to herself—and one can never see when a Darning-needle laughs. There she sat, as proud as if she was in a state coach, and looked all about her.

“May I be permitted to ask if you are of gold?” she inquired of the Pin, her neighbor. “You have a very pretty appearance and a peculiar head, but it is only little. You must take pains to grow, for it's not every one that has sealing-wax dropped upon him.”

And the Darning-needle drew herself up so proudly that she fell out of the handkerchief right into the sink, which the cook was rinsing out.

“Now we're going on a journey,” said the Darning-needle. “If I only don't get lost!”

But she really was lost.

“I'm too fine for this world,” she observed, as she lay in the gutter. “But I know who I am, and there's always something in that!”

So the Darning-needle kept her proud behavior and did not lose her good humor. And things of many kinds swam over her, chips and straws and pieces of old newspapers.

“Only look how they sail!” said the Darning-needle. “They don't know what is under them! I'm here, I remain firmly here. See, there goes a chip thinking of nothing in the world but of himself—of a chip! There's a straw going by now. How he turns! how he twirls about! Don't think only of yourself, you might easily run up against a stone. There swims a bit of newspaper. What's written upon it has long been forgotten, and yet it gives itself airs. I sit quietly and patiently here. I know who I am, and I shall remain what I am.”

One day something lay close beside her that glittered splendidly; then the Darning-needle believed that it was a diamond; but it was a bit of broken bottle; and because it shone the Darning-needle spoke to it, introducing herself as a breastpin.

“I suppose you are a diamond?” she observed.

“Why, yes, something of that kind.”

And then each believed the other to be a very valuable thing;

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and they began speaking about the world and how very conceited it was.

“I have been in a lady’s box,” said the Darning-needle, “and this lady was a cook. She had five fingers on each hand, and I never saw anything so conceited as those five fingers. And yet they were only there that they might take me out of the box and put me back into it.”

“Were they of good birth?” asked the Bit of Bottle.

“No, indeed,” replied the Darning-needle, “but very haughty. There were five brothers, all of the finger family. They kept very proudly together, though they were of different lengths: the outermost, the thumbling, was short and fat; he walked out in front of the ranks and only had one joint in his back, and could only make a single bow; but he said that if he were hacked off a man that man was useless for service in war. Daintymouth, the second finger, thrust himself into sweet and sour, pointed to sun and moon, and gave the impression when they wrote. Long-man, the third, looked at all the others over his shoulder. Gold-border, the fourth, went about with a golden belt round his waist; and little Playman did nothing at all, and was proud of it. There was nothing but bragging among them, and therefore I went away.”

“And now we sit here and glitter!” said the Bit of Bottle.

At that moment more water came into the gutter, so that it overflowed, and the Bit of Bottle was carried away.

“So he is disposed of,” observed the Darning-needle. “I remain here; I am too fine. But that’s my pride, and my pride is honorable.” And proudly she sat there, and had many great thoughts. “I could almost believe I had been born of a sunbeam, I’m so fine! It really appears as if the sunbeams were always seeking for me under the water. Ah! I’m so fine that my mother cannot find me. If I had my old eye which broke off I think I could cry; but, no, I should not do that; it’s not genteel to cry.”

One day a couple of street-boys lay grubbing in the gutter, where they sometimes found old nails, farthings, and similar

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treasures. It was dirty work, but they took great delight in it.

"Oh!" cried one, who had pricked himself with the Darning-needle, "there's a fellow for you!"

"I'm not a fellow; I'm a young lady!" said the Darning-needle.

But nobody listened to her. The sealing-wax had come off and she had turned black; but black makes one look slender, and she thought herself finer even than before.

"Here comes an egg-shell sailing along!" said the boys; and they stuck the Darning-needle fast in the egg-shell.

"White walls and black myself—that looks well," remarked the Darning-needle. "Now one can see me. I only hope I shall not be seasick!" But she was not seasick at all. "It is good against seasickness if one has a steel stomach, and does not forget that one is a little more than an ordinary person! Now my seasickness is over. The finer one is the more one can bear."

"Crack!" went the egg-shell; for a wagon went over her.

"Good heavens, how it crushes one!" said the Darning-needle. "I'm getting seasick now—I'm quite sick."

But she was not really sick, though the wagon went over her; she lay there at full length, and there she may lie.





XXVIII

THE PRINCESS ON THE PEA

THERE was once a Prince who wanted to marry a Princess; but she was to be a *real* princess. So he traveled about, all through the world, to find a real one, but everywhere there was something in the way. There were princesses enough, but whether they were *real* princesses he could not quite make out; there was always something that did not seem quite right. So he came home again, and was quite sad; for he wished so much to have a *real* princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on. It lightened and thundered, the rain streamed down; it was quite fearful! Then there was a knocking at the town gate, and the old King went out to open it.

It was a Princess who stood outside the

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gate. But, mercy! how she looked from the rain and the rough weather! The water ran down from her hair and her clothes; it ran in at the points of her shoes and out at the heels; and yet she declared that she was a real princess.

"Yes, we will soon find that out," thought the old Queen. But she said nothing, only went into the bedchamber, took all the bedding off, and put a pea on the flooring of the bedstead; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea, and then twenty eider-down beds upon the mattresses. On this the Princess had to lie all night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

"Oh, miserably!" said the Princess. "I scarcely closed my eyes all night long. Goodness knows what was in my bed. I lay upon something hard, so that I am black and blue all over. It is quite dreadful!"

Now they saw that she was a real princess, for through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eider-down beds she had felt the pea. No one but a real princess could be so delicate.

So the Prince took her for his wife, for now he knew that he had a true princess; and the pea was put in the museum, and it is there now unless somebody has carried it off.

Look you, this is a true story.



XXIX

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP

HAVE you ever seen a very, very old clothes-press, quite black with age, on which all sorts of flourishes and foliage were carved? Just such a one stood in a certain room. It was a legacy from a grandmother, and it was carved from top to bottom with roses and tulips; the most curious flourishes were to be seen on it, and between them little stags popped out their heads with zig-zag antlers. But on the top a whole man was carved. True, he was laughable to look at, for he showed his teeth—laughing one could not call it—had goat's legs, little horns on his head, and a long beard. The children in the room always called him General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent Goatslegs, for this was a name difficult to pronounce, and there are few who got the title; but to cut him out in wood—that was no trifle. However, there he was. He looked down upon the table and toward the mirror, for there a charming little porcelain Shepherdess was standing. Her shoes were gilded, her gown was tastefully looped up with a red rose, and she had a golden hat and cloak; in short, she was most exquisite. Close by stood a little Chimney-sweep, as black as a coal, but of porcelain, too. He was just as clean and pretty as another; as to his being a sweep, that was only what he represented; and the porcelain manufacturer

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could just as well have made a prince of him as a chimney-sweep if he had chosen; one was as easy as the other.

There he stood so prettily with his ladder, and with a little round face as fair and as rosy as that of the Shepherdess. In reality this was a fault; for a little black he certainly ought to have been. He was quite close to the Shepherdess; both stood where they had been placed; and as soon as they were put there they had mutually promised each other eternal fidelity, for they suited each other exactly—they were young, they were of the same porcelain, and both equally fragile.

Close to them stood another figure three times as large as they were. It was an old Chinese that could nod his head. He was of porcelain, too, and said that he was grandfather of the little Shepherdess; but this he could not prove. He asserted, moreover, that he had authority over her, and that was the reason he had nodded his assent to the General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent Goatslegs, who paid his addresses to the Shepherdess.

"In him," said the old Chinese, "you will have a husband who, I verily believe, is of mahogany. You will be Mrs. Goats-legs, the wife of a General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent, who has his shelves full of plate, besides what is hidden in secret drawers and recesses."

"I will not go into the dark cupboard," said the little Shepherdess; "I have heard say that he has eleven wives of porcelain in there already."

"Then you may be the twelfth," said the Chinese. "To-night, as soon as the old clothes-press cracks, as sure as I am a Chinese, we will keep the wedding." And then he nodded his head and fell asleep.

But the little Shepherdess wept and looked at her beloved—at the porcelain Chimney-sweep.

"I implore you," said she, "fly hence with me; for here it is impossible for us to remain."

"I will do all you ask," said the little Chimney-sweep. "Let us leave this place. I think my trade will enable me to support you."



THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP SPOKE SENSIBLY TO HER

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"If we were only down from the table," said she. "I shall not be happy till we are far from here and free."

He consoled her and showed her how she was to set her little foot on the carved border and on the gilded foliage which twined around the leg of the table, brought his ladder to her assistance, and at last both were on the floor; but when they looked toward the old clothes-press they observed a great stir. All the carved stags stretched their heads out farther, raised their antlers, and turned round their heads. The General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent gave a jump and called to the old Chinese, "They are eloping! they are eloping!"

At this she grew a little frightened and jumped quickly over the ridge into the drawer.

Here lay three or four packs of cards which were not complete, and a little puppet-show which was set up as well as it was possible to do. A play was being performed, and all the ladies, Diamonds, as well as Hearts, Clubs, and Spades, sat in the front row and fanned themselves with the tulips they held in their hands, while behind them stood the varlets. The play was about two persons who could not have each other, at which the Shepherdess wept, for it was her own history.

"I cannot bear it longer," said she; "I must get out of the drawer."

But when she had got down on the floor and looked up to the table she saw that the old Chinese was awake, and that his whole body was rocking.

"The old Chinese is coming!" cried the little Shepherdess; and down she fell on her porcelain knee, so frightened was she.

"A thought has struck me," said the Chimney-sweep; "let us creep into the great Potpourri Jar that stands in the corner; there we can lie on roses and lavender, and, if he comes after us, throw dust in his eyes."

"'Tis of no use," said she. "Besides, I know that the old Chinese and the Potpourri Jar were once betrothed; and when one has been once on such terms a little regard always lingers

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behind. No; for us there is nothing left but to wander forth into the wide world."

"Have you really courage to go forth with me into the wide world?" asked the Chimney-sweep, tenderly. "Have you considered how large it is, and that we can never come back here again?"

"I have," said she.

And the Sweep gazed fixedly upon her, and then said: "My way lies up the chimney. Have you really courage to go with me through the stove, and to creep through all the flues? We shall then get into the main flue, after which I am not at a loss what to do. Up we mount, then, so high that they can never reach us; and at the top is an opening that leads out into the world."

And he led her toward the door of the stove.

"It looks quite black," said she; but still she went with him, and on through all the intricacies of the interior and through the flues, where a pitchy darkness reigned.

"We are now in the chimney," said she; "and behold, behold, above us is shining the loveliest star!"

It was a real star in the sky that shone straight down upon them, as if to show them the way. They climbed and they crept higher and higher. It was a frightful way; but he lifted her up, he held her, and showed her the best places on which to put her little porcelain feet; and thus they reached the top of the chimney and seated themselves on the edge of it; for they were tired, which is not to be wondered at.

The heaven and all its stars were above them, and all the roofs of the town below them; they could see far around, far away into the world. The poor Shepherdess had never pictured it to herself thus; she leaned her little head on her Sweep and wept so bitterly that all the gilding of her girdle came off.

"Oh, this is too much!" said she; "I cannot bear it. The world is too large. Oh, were I but again on the little table under the looking-glass! I shall never be happy till I am there again. I have followed you into the wide world; now, if you really love me, you may follow me home again."

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And the Chimney-sweep spoke sensibly to her, spoke to her about the old Chinese and the General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent; but she sobbed so violently and kissed her little Sweep so passionately that he was obliged to give way, although it was not right to do so.

So now down they climbed again with great difficulty, crept through the flues and into the stove, where they listened behind the door to discover if anybody was in the room. It was quite still; they peeped, and there, on the floor in the middle of the room, lay the old Chinese. He had fallen from the table in trying to follow the fugitives and was broken in three pieces; his whole back was but a stump, and his head had rolled into a corner, while General-clothes-press-inspector-head-superintendent Goatslegs was standing where he had ever stood absorbed in thought.





XXX

THE FLAX

THE Flax stood in blossom; it had pretty little blue flowers delicate as a moth's wings, and even more delicate. The sun shone on the Flax, and the rain-clouds moistened it, and this was just as good for it as it is for little children when they are washed and afterward get a kiss from their mother; they become much prettier, and so did the Flax.

"The people say that I stand uncommonly well," said the Flax, "and that I'm fine and long and shall make a capital piece of linen. How happy I am! I'm certainly the happiest of beings. How well I am off! And I may come to something! How the sunshine gladdens, and the rain tastes good and refreshes me! I'm wonderfully happy; I'm the happiest of beings."

"Yes, yes, yes!" said the Hedge-stake. "You don't know the world, but we do, for we have knots in us;" and then it creaked out mournfully:

"Snip-snap-snurre,
Bassellurre!
The song is done."

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"No, it is not done," said the Flax. "To-morrow the sun will shine or the rain will refresh us. I feel that I'm growing. I feel that I'm in blossom! I'm the happiest of beings."

But one day the people came and took the Flax by the head and pulled it up by the root. That hurt; and it was laid in water as if they were going to drown it, and then put on the fire as if it was going to be roasted. It was quite fearful!

"One can't always have good times," said the Flax. "One must make one's experiences, and so one gets to know something."

But bad times certainly came. The Flax was moistened and roasted and broken and hackled. Yes, it did not even know what the operations were called that they did with it. It was put on the spinning-wheel—whir! whir! whir!—it was not possible to collect one's thoughts.

"I have been uncommonly happy," it thought, in all its pain. "One must be content with the good one has enjoyed. Contented! contented! Oh!" And it continued to say that when it was put into the loom, and till it became a large, beautiful piece of linen. All the Flax, to the last stalk, was used in making one piece.

"But this is quite remarkable! I should never have believed it! How favorable fortune is to me! The Hedge-stake is well informed, truly, with its:

Snip-snap-snurre,
Basselurre!

The song is not done by any means. Now it's beginning in earnest. That's quite remarkable! If I've suffered something I've been made into something! I'm the happiest of all! How strong and fine I am! how white and long! That's something different from being a mere plant; even if one bears flowers one is not attended to, and only gets watered when it rains. Now I'm attended to and cherished; the maid turns me over every morning, and I get a shower-bath from the watering-pot every evening. Yes, the clergyman's wife has even made a speech about me, and says I'm the best piece in the whole parish. I cannot possibly be happier!"

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Now the Linen was taken into the house and put under the scissors. How they cut and tore it, and then pricked it with needles! That was not pleasant; but twelve pieces of body linen of a kind not often mentioned by name, but indispensable to all people, were made of it—a whole dozen!

"Just look! Now something has really been made of me! So that was my destiny. That's a real blessing. Now I shall be of some use in the world, and that's right, that's a true pleasure! We've been made into twelve things, but yet we're all one and the same; we're just a dozen. How charming that is!"

Years rolled on, and now they would hold together no longer.

"It must be over one day," said each piece. "I would gladly have held together a little longer, but one must not expect impossibilities."

They were now torn into pieces and fragments. They thought it was all over now, for they were hacked to shreds and softened and boiled; yes, they themselves did not know all that was done to them; and then they became beautiful white paper.

"Now, that is a surprise, and a glorious surprise!" said the Paper. "Now I'm finer than before, and I shall be written on; that is remarkably good fortune."

And really the most beautiful stories and verses were written upon it, and only once there came a blot; that was certainly remarkably good fortune. And the people heard what was upon it; it was sensible and good, and made people much more sensible and better; there was a great blessing in the words that were on this Paper.

"That is more than I ever imagined when I was a little blue flower in the fields. How could I fancy that I should ever spread joy and knowledge among men? I can't yet understand it myself, but it really is so. I have done nothing myself but what I was obliged with my weak powers to do for my own preservation, and yet I have been promoted from one joy and honor to another. Each time when I think 'the song is done' it begins again in a higher and better way. Now I shall certainly be sent about to journey through the world, so that all people may read

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me. That cannot be otherwise; it's the only probable thing. I have splendid thoughts, as many as I had pretty flowers in the old times. I'm the happiest of beings."

But the Paper was not sent on its travels—it was sent to the printer, and everything that was written upon it was set up in type for a book, or rather for many hundreds of books, for in this way a far greater number could derive pleasure and profit from the book than if the one paper on which it was written had run about the world, to be worn out before it had got half-way.

"Yes, that is certainly the wisest way," thought the Written Paper. "I really did not think of that. I shall stay at home and be held in honor, just like an old grandfather; and I am really the grandfather of all these books. Now something can be effected; I could not have wandered about thus. He who wrote all this looked at me; every word flowed from his pen right into me. I am the happiest of all."

Then the Paper was tied together in a bundle and thrown into a tub that stood in the wash-house.

"It's good resting after work," said the Paper. "It's very right that one should collect one's thoughts. Now I'm able for the first time to think of what is in me, and to know oneself is true progress. What will be done with me now? At any rate, I shall go forward again; I'm always going forward; I've found that out."

Now, one day all the Paper was taken out and laid by on the hearth; it was to be burned, for it might not be sold to hucksters to be used for covering for butter and sugar, they said. And all the children in the house stood round about, for they wanted to see the Paper burn, that flamed so prettily, and afterward one could see many red sparks among the ashes careering here and there. One after another faded out as quickly as the wind, and that they called "seeing the children come out of school," and the last spark was the old schoolmaster; one of them thought he had already gone, but the next moment there came another spark. "There goes the schoolmaster!" they said. Yes, they knew all about it; they should have known who it was who went there; we shall get to know it, but they did not. All the

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old Paper, the whole bundle, was laid upon the fire, and it was soon alight. "Ugh!" it said, and burst out into bright flame. Ugh! that was not very agreeable, but when the whole was wrapped in bright flames, these mounted up higher than the Flax had ever been able to lift its little blue flowers, and glittered as the white Linen had never been able to glitter. All the written letters turned for a moment quite red, and all the words and thoughts turned to flame.

"Now I'm mounting straight up to the sun," said a voice in the flame; and it was as if a thousand voices said this in unison; and the flames mounted up through the chimney and out at the top, and more delicate than the flames, invisible to human eyes, little tiny beings floated there, as many as there had been blossoms on the Flax. They were lighter even than the flame from which they were born; and when the flame was extinguished, and nothing remained of the Paper but black ashes, they danced over it once more, and where they touched the black mass the little red sparks appeared. The children came out of school, and the schoolmaster was the last of all. That was fun! and the children sang over the dead ashes:

"Snip-snap-snurre,
Bassellurre!
The song is done."

But the little invisible beings all said:

"The song is never done, that is the best of all. We know it, and therefore we're the happiest of all."

But the children could neither hear that nor understand it, nor ought they, for children must not know everything.





XXXI

THE LEAP-FROG

A FLEA, a Grasshopper, and a Leap-frog once wanted to see which could jump highest; and they invited the whole world and everybody else besides who chose to come to see the festival. Three famous jumpers were they, as every one would say, when they all met together in the room.

“I will give my daughter to him who jumps highest,” exclaimed the King; “for it is not so amusing where there is no prize to jump for.”

The Flea was the first to step forward. He had exquisite manners, and bowed to the company on all sides; for he had noble blood, and was, moreover, accustomed to the society of man alone; and that makes a great difference.

Then came the Grasshopper. He was considerably heavier, but he was well-mannered and wore a green uniform, which he had by right of birth; he said, moreover, that he belonged to a very ancient Egyptian family, and that in the house where he then was he was thought much of. The fact was, he had been just brought out of the fields and put in a pasteboard house three stories high, all made of court-cards with the colored side inward; and doors and windows cut out of the body of the Queen of Hearts. “I sing so well,” said he, “that sixteen native

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grasshoppers who have chirped from infancy, and yet got no house built of cards to live in, grew thinner than they were before for sheer vexation when they heard me."

It was thus that the Flea and the Grasshopper gave an account of themselves, and thought they were quite good enough to marry a princess.

The Leap-frog said nothing; but people gave it as their opinion that he therefore thought the more; and when the House-dog snuffed at him with his nose, he confessed the Leap-frog was of good family. The old councilor, who had three orders given him to make him hold his tongue, asserted that the Leap-frog was a prophet; for that one could see on his back if there would be a severe or mild winter, and that was what one could not see even on the back of the man who writes the almanac.

"I say nothing; it is true," exclaimed the King; "but I have my own opinion, notwithstanding."

Now the trial was to take place. The Flea jumped so high that nobody could see where he went to; so they all asserted he had not jumped at all; and that was dishonorable.

The Grasshopper jumped only half as high; but he leaped into the King's face, who said that was ill-mannered.

The Leap-frog stood still for a long time, lost in thought; it was believed at last he would not jump at all.

"I only hope he is not unwell," said the House-dog; when, pop! he made a jump all on one side into the lap of the Princess, who was sitting on a little golden stool close by.

Hereupon the King said: "There is nothing above my daughter; therefore to bound up to her is the highest jump that can be made; but for this one must possess understanding, and the Leap-frog has shown that he *has* understanding. He is brave and intellectual."

And so he won the Princess.

"It's all the same to me," said the Flea; "she may have the old Leap-frog, for all I care. I jumped the highest; but in this world merit seldom meets its reward. A fine exterior is what people look at nowadays."

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The Flea then went into foreign service, where, it is said, he was killed.

The Grasshopper sat without on a green bank and reflected on worldly things; and he said, too, "Yes, a fine exterior is everything—a fine exterior is what people care about." And then he began chirping his peculiar melancholy song, from which we have taken this history; and which may very possibly be all untrue, although it does stand here printed in black and white.

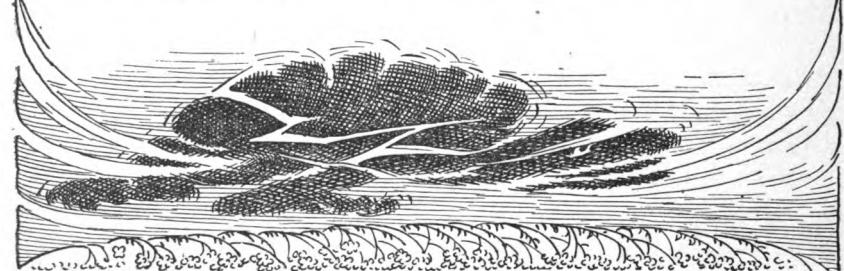




XXXII

THE BUCKWHEAT

OFTEN, after a thunder-storm, when one passes a field in which buckwheat is growing it appears quite blackened and singed. It is just as if a flame of fire had passed across it; and then the countryman says, "It got that from lightning." But whence has it received that? I will tell you what the sparrow told me about it, and the sparrow heard it from an old willow-tree which stood by a buckwheat-field and still stands there. It is quite a great venerable Willow-tree, but crippled and old; it is burst in the middle, and grass and brambles grow out of the cleft; the tree bends



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forward, and the branches hang quite down to the ground, as if they were long green hair.

On all the fields round about corn was growing, not only rye and barley, but also oats; yes, the most capital oats, which when ripe looks like a number of little yellow canary birds sitting upon a spray. The corn stood smiling, and the richer an ear was the deeper did it bend in pious humility.

But there was also a field of buckwheat, and this field was exactly opposite to the old Willow-tree. The Buckwheat did not bend at all, like the rest of the grain, but stood up proudly and stiffly.

"I'm as rich as any corn-ear," said he. Moreover, I'm very much handsomer; my flowers are beautiful as the blossoms of the apple-tree; it's quite a delight to look upon me and mine. Do you know anything more splendid than we are, you old Willow-tree?"

And the Willow-tree nodded his head just as if he would have said, "Yes, that's true enough!"

But the Buckwheat spread itself out from mere vainglory and said: "The stupid tree! he's so old that the grass grows in his body."

Now a terrible storm came on; all the field flowers folded their leaves together or bowed their little heads while the storm passed over them, but the Buckwheat stood erect in its pride.

"Bend your head like us," said the Flowers.

"I've not the slightest cause to do so," replied the Buckwheat.

"Bend your head as we do," cried the various Crops. "Now the Storm comes flying on. He has wings that reach from the clouds just down to the earth, and he'll beat you in halves before you can cry for mercy."

"Yes, but I won't bend," quoth the Buckwheat.

"Shut up your flowers and bend your leaves," said the old Willow-tree. "Don't look up at the lightning when the cloud bursts; even men do not do that, for in the lightning one may look into heaven, but the light dazzles even men; and what

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would happen to us if we dared do so—we, the plants of the field, that are much less worthy than they?"

"Much less worthy!" cried the Buckwheat. "Now I'll just look straight up into heaven."

And it did so, in its pride and vainglory. It was as if the whole world were on fire, so vivid was the lightning.

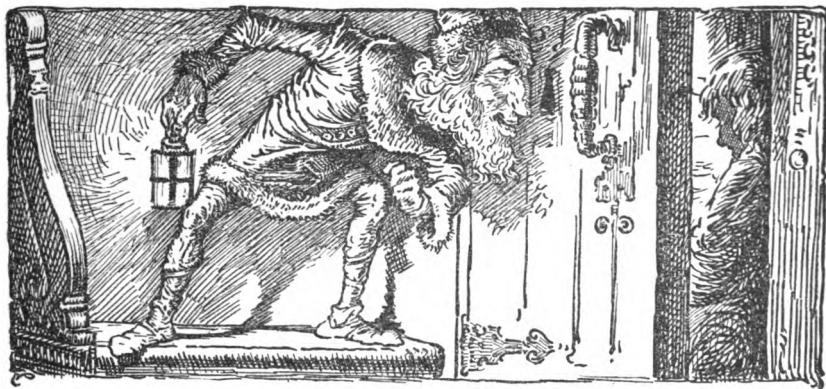
When afterward the bad weather had passed by, the flowers and the crops stood in the still, pure air quite refreshed by the rain; but the Buckwheat was burned coal-black by the lightning, and it was now like a dead weed upon the field.

And the old Willow-tree waved its branches in the wind, and great drops of water fell down out of the green leaves, just as if the tree wept.

And the Sparrows asked: "Why do you weep? Here everything is so cheerful; see how the sun shines; see how the clouds sail on. Do you not breathe the scent of flowers and bushes? Why do you weep, Willow-tree?"

And the Willow-tree told them of the pride of the Buckwheat, of its vainglory, and of the punishment which always follows such sin.

I, who tell you this tale, have heard it from the sparrows. They told it me one evening when I begged them to give me a story.



XXXIII

THE NIS AT THE GROCER'S

THERE was once a Student—a proper Student; he lived in an attic, and owned just nothing at all. There was also a Grocer—a proper Grocer; he lived in a comfortable room, and owned the whole house. So the Nis¹ clung to the Grocer, for the Grocer could give him, every Christmas eve, a bowl of groats, with such a great lump of butter in it! The Student could not afford him that; so the Nis dwelt in the shop, and was right comfortable there.

One evening the Student came by the back door into the shop to buy candles and cheese; he had no servant to send, and so he came himself. They gave him what he wanted, he paid the money, and the Grocer and Madam, his wife—she was a woman! she had uncommon gifts of speech!—both nodded “Good evening” to him. The Student nodded in return, and was turning away when his eye fell upon something that was printed on the paper in which his cheese was wrapped, and he stood still to read it. It was a leaf torn out of an old book, a book that ought never to have been torn up, a book full of rare old poetry.

¹The Nis of Denmark and Norway is the same imaginary being that is called Brownie in Scotland and Kobold in Germany. He is represented as a dwarf, dressed in gray, with a pointed red cap.

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"Plenty more, if you like it," quoth the Grocer; "I gave an old woman some coffee-beans for it; you shall have the whole for eight skillings."¹

"Thank you," said the Student, "let me have it instead of the cheese; I can very well sup off bread and butter, and it would be a sin and a shame for such a book as this to be torn up into scraps. You are an excellent man, a practical man, but as for poetry, you have no more taste for it than that tub!"

Now this speech sounded somewhat rude, but it was spoken in jest; the Student laughed and the Grocer laughed, too. But the Nis felt extremely vexed that such a speech should be made to a Grocer who was a householder and sold the best butter.

So when night was come, the shop shut up, and all except the Student were gone to bed, the Nis stole away Madam's tongue—she did not want it while she slept. And now whatever object he put it upon not only received forthwith the faculty of speech, but was able to express its thoughts and feelings to the full as well as Madam herself. Fortunately, the tongue could be in only one place at a time, otherwise there would have been a rare tumult and chattering in the shop, all speaking at once.

And the Nis put the tongue on the tub wherein all the old newspapers lay. "Is it really true," he asked, "that you do not know what poetry is?"

"Don't I know!" replied the Tub; "it is something that is put into the newspapers to fill them up. I should think I have more of it in me than the Student has, though I am only a Tub at the Grocer's!"

And the Nis put the tongue on the coffee-mill—oh, how bravely it worked then!—and he put it on the money-box and on sundry other articles; and he asked them all the same question, and all gave much the same answer; all were of the same opinion, and the opinion of the multitude must be respected.

¹ A skilling is a small Danish coin, in value a little less than a cent.

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“Now for the Student!” and the Nis glided very softly up the back stairs leading to the Student’s attic. There was light within, and the Nis peeped through the keyhole to see what the Student was about. He was reading in his new-found treasure, the torn old book. But oh, how glorious! A bright sunbeam, as it were, shot out from the book, expanding itself into a mighty, broad-stemmed tree, which raised itself on high and spread its branches over the Student. Every leaf on the tree was fresh and green, every flower was like a graceful, girlish head—the faces of some lit up with eyes dark, thrilling, and passionate, and others animated by serene blue orbs, gentle as an angel’s. And every fruit was like a glittering star, and such delicious melody was wafted around!

No, such glory and beauty as this never could the little Nis have imagined. And, mounted on tiptoe, he stood peeping and peeping, till at last the bright light within died away, till the Student blew out his lamp and went to bed. Nor even then could the little Nis tear himself away, for soft, sweet music still floated around, lulling the Student to rest.

“This is beyond compare!” exclaimed the little Nis; “this could I never have anticipated! I believe I will stay with the Student henceforth.” But he paused and reflected, and reasoned coolly with himself, and then he sighed, “The Student has no groats to give me.” So down he went; yes, back he went to the Grocer’s; and it was well that he did, for the Tub had, meantime, nearly worn out Madam’s tongue by giving out through one ring all that was rumbling within it, and was just on the point of turning in order to give out the same through the other ring when the Nis came and took the tongue back to Madam. But from that time forward the whole shop, from the cash-box down to the pinewood fagots, formed their opinion from that of the Tub; and they all had such confidence in it, and treated it with so much respect, that when the Grocer read aloud in the evening art and the stage criticism from the *Times* they all thought it was the Tub’s doings.

But the little Nis was no longer content to stay quietly in

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the shop, listening to all the wit and wisdom to be gathered there; no, as soon as ever the lamp gleamed from the attic chamber he was gone; that slight thread of lamplight issuing from under the Student's door acted upon him as it were a strong anchor-rope drawing him upward; he must away to peep through the keyhole. And then he felt a tumult of pleasure within him, a feeling such as we all have known while gazing on the glorious sea when the Angel of the Storm is passing over it; and then he would burst out weeping, he knew not why, but they were happy, blessed tears. Oh, delightful beyond conception would it have been to sit with the Student under the tree; but that it would be too much happiness, content was he and right glad of the keyhole. And there he would stand for hours in the draughty passage, with the bleak autumn wind blowing down from the trap-door in the roof full upon him; but the enthusiastic little spirit never heeded the cold, nor, indeed, felt it at all until the light in the attic had been extinguished and the sweet music had died away in the mournful night wind. Ugh! then he did shake and shiver, and crept back into his comfortable warm corner. And when Christmas eve came, and the great lump of butter in his groats—ah! then he felt that the Grocer was his master, after all!

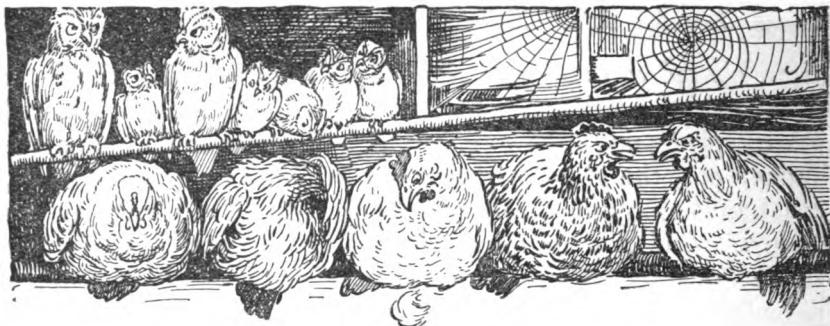
But one midnight the Nis was awaked by a terrible rat-tat upon the window-shutters; a crowd of people outside were shouting with all their might and main; the watchman was sounding his alarum; the whole street was lit up with a blaze of flame. Fire! where was it? at the Grocer's, or next door? The tumult was beyond description. Madam, in her bewilderment, took her gold ear-rings off her ears and put them in her pocket by way of saving something; the Grocer was in a state of excitement about his bonds, the maid wild for her silk mantilla. Every one would fain rescue whatsoever he deemed most precious; so would the little Nis. In two bounds he was up-stairs in the attic. The Student was standing at the open window, calmly admiring the fire, which was in the neighbor's house, not theirs; the marvelous book lay on the table, the little Nis seized it, put

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it into his red cap and held it aloft with both hands: the most precious thing the house possessed was saved! Away he darted with it, sprang upon the roof, and in a second was seated on the chimney-pot, the glorious raging flames like a halo around him, both hands grasping firmly the little red cap wherein lay his treasure. And now he knew where his heart was, felt that the Student was really his master; but when the fire was extinguished and he recovered his senses—what then? “I will divide my allegiance between them,” quoth he; “I cannot quite give up the Grocer, because of my bowl of groats.”

Now this was really quite human. The rest of us stick to the Grocer—for groats.





XXXIV

“IT’S QUITE TRUE!”

“THAT is a terrible affair!” said a Hen; and she said it in a quarter of the town where the occurrence had not happened. “That is a terrible affair in the poultry-house. I cannot sleep alone to-night! It is quite fortunate that there are many of us on the roost together!” And she told a tale, at which the feathers of the other birds stood on end and the cock’s comb fell down flat. It’s quite true!

But we will begin at the beginning; and the beginning begins in a poultry-house in another part of the town. The sun went down, and the fowls jumped up on their perch to roost. There was a Hen with white feathers and short legs, who laid her right number of eggs, and was a respectable hen in every way; as she flew up onto the roost she pecked herself with her beak, and a little feather fell out.

“There it goes!” said she. “The more I peck myself the handsomer I grow!” And she said it quite merrily, for she was a joker among the hens, though, as I have said, she was very respectable; and then she went to sleep.

It was dark all around; hen sat by hen, but the one that sat next to the merry Hen did not sleep; she heard and she didn’t hear, as one should do in this world if one wishes to live in quiet; but she could not refrain from telling it to her next neighbor.

“Did you hear what was said here just now? I name no

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names; but here is a hen who wants to peck her feathers out to look well. If I were a cock I should despise her."

And just above the hens sat the Owl, with her husband and her little owlets; the family had sharp ears, and they all heard every word that the neighboring Hen had spoken, and they rolled their eyes, and the Mother Owl clapped her wings and said:

"Don't listen to it! But I suppose you heard what was said there? I heard it with my own ears, and one must hear much before one's ears fall off. There is one among the fowls who has so completely forgotten what is becoming conduct in a hen that she pulls out all her feathers, and then lets the cock see her."

"*Prenez garde aux enfants*," said the Father Owl. "That's not fit for the children to hear."

"I'll tell it to the neighbor owl; she's a very proper owl to associate with." And she flew away.

"Hoo! hoo! to-whoo!" they both screeched in front of the neighbor's dove-cote to the doves within. "Have you heard it? Have you heard it? Hoo! hoo! There's a hen who has pulled out all her feathers for the sake of the cock. She'll die with cold, if she's not dead already."

"Coo! coo! Where, where?" cried the Pigeons.

"In the neighbor's poultry-yard. I've as good as seen it myself. It's hardly proper to repeat the story, but it's quite true!"

"Believe it! believe every single word of it!" cooed the Pigeons, and they cooed down into their own poultry-yard. "There's a hen, and some say that there are two of them that have plucked out all their feathers, that they may not look like the rest, and that they may attract the cock's attention. That's a bold game, for one may catch cold and die of a fever, and they are both dead."

"Wake up! wake up!" crowed the Cock, and he flew up onto the plank; his eyes were still very heavy with sleep, but yet he crowed. "Three hens have died of an unfortunate attachment to a cock. They have plucked out all their feathers. That's a terrible story. I won't keep it to myself; let it travel farther."

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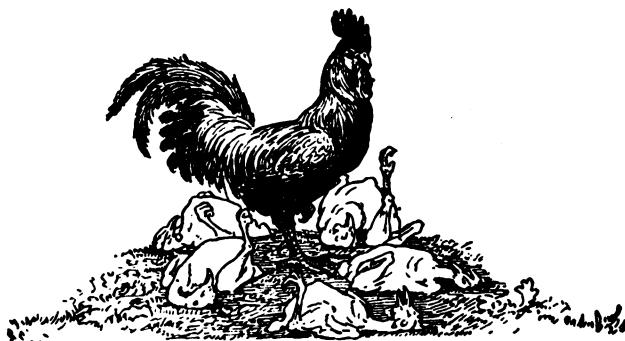
"Let it travel farther!" piped the Bats; and the fowls clucked and the cocks crowed: "Let it go farther! let it go farther!" And so the story traveled from poultry-yard to poultry-yard, and at last came back to the place from which it had gone forth.

"Five fowls," it was told, "have plucked out all their feathers to show which of them had become thinnest out of love to the cock; and then they have pecked each other and fallen down dead, to the shame and disgrace of their families, and to the great loss of the proprietor."

And the Hen who had lost the little loose feather, of course, did not know her own story again; and, as she was a very respectable Hen, she said:

"I despise those fowls; but there are many of that sort. One ought not to hush up such a thing, and I shall do what I can that the story may get into the papers, and then it will be spread over all the country, and that will serve those fowls right, and their families, too."

It was put into the newspaper; it was printed; and it's quite true—that one little feather may swell till it becomes five fowls.





XXXV

THE SUMMER-GOWK¹

DEEP lay the snow, for it was winter-time, the air was cold, the wind sharp: but within doors all was snug and warm. And within doors lay the flower; in its bulb it lay, under earth and snow.

One day there fell rain; the drops trickled through the snow coverlet, down into the earth, and stirred against the flower-bulb, telling of the world of light above. And presently a sunbeam, pointed and slender, came piercing its way to the bulb and tapped on it.

“Come in,” said the Flower.

“That I can’t,” said the Sunbeam; “I am not strong enough to lift the latch. I shall be strong in summer.”

“When will it be summer?” asked the Flower; and it asked this again whenever a sunbeam pierced down to it. But summer was still far away: the ground was covered with snow, and every night there was ice on the water.

“How long it is! how long it is!” said the Flower. “I feel quite cribbed and cramped. I must stretch myself: I must raise

¹ *Sommergjæk* (meaning *summer-dupe*) is a Danish name for the snowdrop. Among ourselves, *gowk* and *gawky* (like *Gauch* in German) are common provincial terms for a cuckoo or for a fool. “In the north of England,” says Brand (in his *Popular Antiquities*), “April fools are called ‘April Gouks.’” The form *geck* (also used in Germany) was to be found here in the time of Shakespeare. Malvolio, for instance, complains that he has been “made the most notorious *geck* and *gull*, that e'er invention played on.” *Twelfth Night*, Act v. Sc. 1.

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myself: I *must* lift the latch and look out, and nod good-morrow to the summer; and that will be a merry time!"

And the Flower rose and strained from within, against the thin shell that had been softened by the rain, warmed by the earth and snow, and tapped upon by the sunbeam. It shot up from under the snow, with a pale-green bud on its tender stalk, and narrow thick leaves, that curled around it for a screen. The snow was cold, but glittering with light, and easy enough to push through; and here came the sunbeams with greater strength than before.

"Welcome! welcome!" sang every Sunbeam; and the Flower raised itself above the snow, up into the world of light. The sunbeams kissed and caressed it till it fully unfolded itself, white as snow, and decked with green stripes. It bowed its head in gladness and humility.

"Beautiful flower!" sang the Sunbeams. "How fresh thou art, and pure! Thou art the first one: thou art the only one! Thou art our darling. Thou art like a bell ringing up the summer, lovely summer, over towns and fields. All snow shall melt; the cold winds be chased away; we shall reign, and all things will grow green. Then thou wilt have fellowship, the lilacs and laburnums, and last of all the roses. But thou art the first, so tender and so pure!"

This was a deep delight to the Flower. It seemed as if the air it breathed was music, and as if its leaves and stem were full of thrilling sunbeams. There it stood, so fine and fragile, and yet so vigorous, in the beauty of youth—stood in its white kirtle with green bands and praised the summer. But summer was not yet come; clouds began to hide the sun; sharp winds blew down upon the Flower.

"Thou art a little too soon," said Wind and Weather. "We still hold sway; this thou shalt feel to thy cost! Why not have kept indoors instead of running out here in thy finery? It is not time for that yet!"

It was biting cold. The days came and never brought a sunbeam. It was weather to freeze it to pieces, such a delicate

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little flower! But there was more strength in it than it knew of. It was strong in its glad faith in the summer, that must be near; for thus its own heart had foretold it, and the sunbeams had confirmed the tale. And so with patient hope it stood in its white dress, in the white snow, bowing its head when the flakes fell thick and heavy and when icy blasts came driving over it.

“Crouch, cringe!” they howled. “Wither and starve! What doest thou here in the cold? Thou hast been lured abroad; the sunbeam hath mocked thee. Now make the best of it, thou summer-gowk!”

“Summer-gowk!” echoed the keen airs of morning.

“A summer-gowk!” shouted children, who came down into the garden; “there it stands so pretty, so beautiful—the first, the only one!”

And the words did good to the Flower; they were like warm sunbeams. In its gladness it never once noticed that it was being plucked. It lay in a child’s hand, was kissed by a child’s mouth, brought into a warm room, gazed at by kind eyes, and set in water—so strengthening, so enlivening. The Flower thought it had passed into the middle of summer.

The daughter of the house was a pretty little lass, just confirmed, and she had a little sweetheart, also just confirmed, who was studying for his livelihood. “He shall be my summer-gowk,” said she; and took the fine flower and laid it in a scented paper that was written all over with verses about the flower, beginning with *summer-gowk* and ending with *summer-gowk*—“now, sweetheart, be my winter-fool!”—she had mocked him with the summer. Yes, that was the meaning of the verses. They were folded up as a letter, and the Flower was slipped inside, and there it lay all in the dark, as dark as when it lay in the bulb. It had to go on a journey, squeezed into the corner of a post-bag; this was not at all pleasant, but it came to an end at last.

The journey was over, the letter was opened and read by the young sweetheart. He was so delighted he kissed the Flower.

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It was locked up, with the verses around it, in a drawer where there were many charming letters, but without a single flower in them. Here again it was the first, the only one, as the sun-beams had called it, and that was something to think about.

It was left to think at leisure for a long time; and it went on thinking throughout the summer and throughout the winter till another summer came round; then it was drawn forth again. But this time the youth looked by no means delighted. He gripped hold of the papers and flung away the verses, so that the Flower dropped out on the floor. Flattened and withered as it was, still it ought not to have been thrown down on the floor; yet, after all, it was better off there than in the fire, where the verses and letters were blazing. What could have happened? What happens so often. The flower had mocked him; that was a joke: the maiden had mocked him; that was no joke: she had chosen another sweetheart for this midsummer.

The next morning the sun shone in on the little flattened Summer-gowk, that looked as if it was painted on the floor. The servant-girl, who was sweeping, picked it up and placed it in one of the books on the table, for she fancied it must have fallen while she was routing about and putting things in order. And again the Flower lay between verses—printed verses, and those are grander than written ones; at all events, they cost more.

Years passed away, and the book stood still on its shelf. At length it was taken down, opened, and read. It was a good book: songs and poems by the Danish poet, Ambrosius Stub, who is well worth knowing. The man who was reading turned a page of the book. "So here is a flower!" said he; "a summer-gowk! Not without meaning does it lie here. Poor Ambrosius Stub; he, too, was a summer-gowk, a poet-gowk. He came before his time, and so he had to face sharp winds and sleet on his rounds among the gentlemen of Fünen. Set up for a show, like the flower in a glass; sent on for a jest, like the flower in a valentine. He was a summer-gowk, a winter-fool, all fun and foolery; and yet the first, the only Danish poet of

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the time; and still, in his youthful freshness, the first, the only one! Aye, lie as a mark in this book, little Summer-gowk; thou art laid here with some meaning."

And thus the Summer-gowk was put back again into the book, and felt honored and delighted with learning that it was a mark in a beautiful song-book; and that he who had first written and sung about the Flower had himself been a summer-gowk and played the fool in winter. Now the Flower understood this in its own way, just as we understand anything in our way.

This is the fairy tale of the *Summer-gowk*.



XXXVI

THE NAUGHTY BOY

THREE was once an old poet—a very good old poet. One evening, as he sat at home, there was very bad weather without. The rain streamed down; but the old poet sat comfortably by his stove, where the fire was burning and the roasting apples hissing.

“There won’t be a dry thread left on the poor people who are out in this weather!” said he, for he was a good old poet.

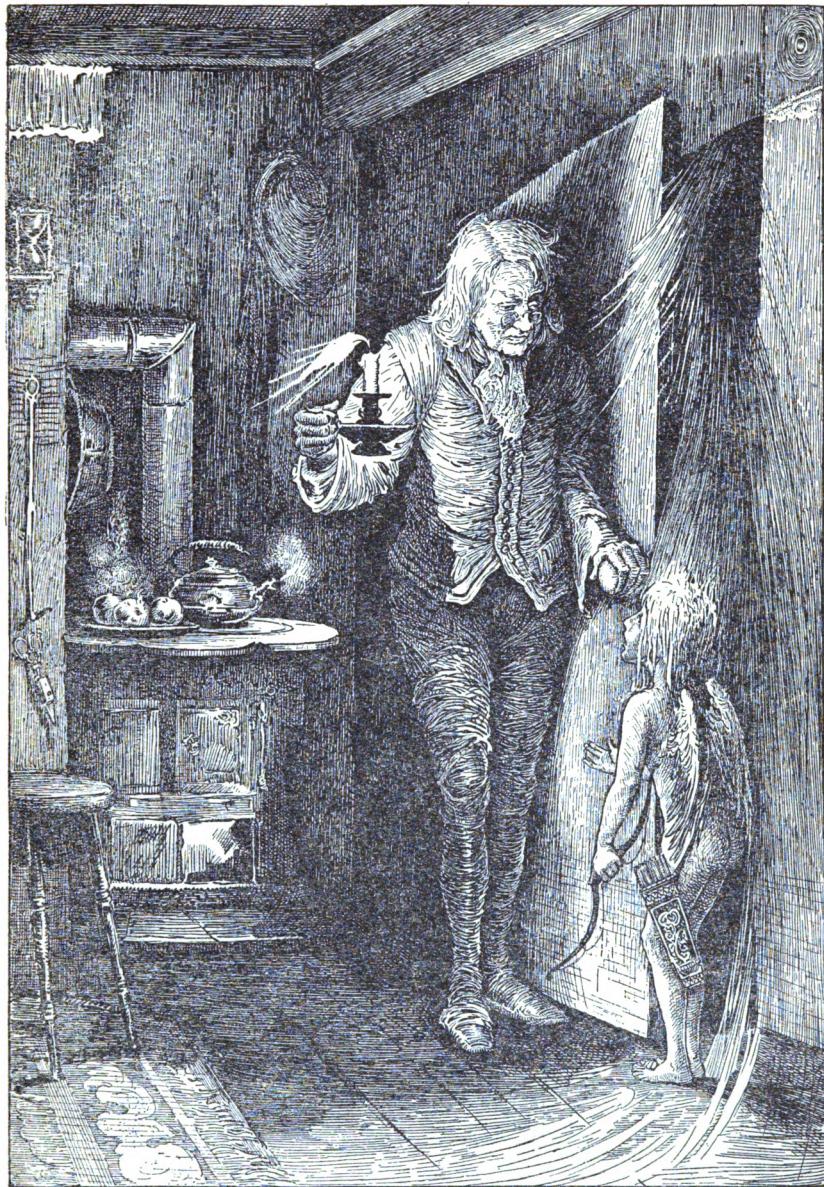
“Oh, open to me! I’m cold and quite wet,” said a little child outside; and it cried and knocked at the door while the rain streamed down and the wind made all the casements rattle.

“You poor little creature!” said the Poet; and he went to open the door. There stood a little boy; he was quite naked, and the water ran in streams from his long fair curls. He was shivering with cold, and had he not been let in he would certainly have perished in the bad weather.

“You little creature,” said the Poet, and took him by the hand, “come to me and I will warm you! You shall have wine and an apple, for you are a capital boy.”

And so he was. His eyes sparkled like two bright stars; and, though the water ran down from his fair curls, they fell in beautiful ringlets. He looked like a little angel child, but was white with cold and trembled all over. In his hand he carried a famous bow, but it looked quite spoiled by the wet; all the color in the beautiful arrows had been blurred together by the rain.

The old Poet sat down by the stove, took the little Boy on his knees, pressed the water out of the long curls, warmed his



THERE STOOD A LITTLE BOY

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hands in his own, and made him some sweet wine-whey; then the Boy recovered himself and his cheeks grew red, and he jumped to the floor and danced round the old Poet.

"You are a merry boy," said the old Poet. "What is your name?"

"My name is Love," he replied; "don't you know me? There lies my bow—I shoot with that, you may believe me! See, now the weather is clearing up outside and the moon shines."

"But your bow is quite spoiled," said the good old Poet.

"That would be a pity," replied the little Boy; and he took the bow and looked at it. "Oh, it is quite dry and has suffered no damage; the string is quite stiff—I will try it!" Then he bent it and laid an arrow across, aimed, and shot the good old Poet straight through the heart. "Do you see now that my bow was not spoiled?" said he, and laughed out loud and ran away. What a naughty boy, to shoot at the old Poet in that way, who had admitted him into the warm room and been so kind to him and given him the best wine and the best apple!

The good Poet lay upon the floor and wept; he was really shot straight into the heart. "Fiel!" he cried, "what a naughty boy this Love is! I shall tell that to all good children, so that they may take care and never play with him, for he will do them a hurt!"

All good children, girls and boys, to whom he told this took good heed of this naughty Love; but still he tricked them, for he is very cunning. When the students come out from the lectures he runs at their side with a book under his arm and has a black coat on. They cannot recognize him at all. And then they take his arm and fancy he is a student, too; but he thrusts the arrow into their breasts. Yes, he is always following people! He sits in the great chandelier in the theater and burns brightly so that the people think he is a lamp; but afterward they see their error. He runs about in the palace garden and on the promenades. Yes, he once shot your father and your mother straight through the heart! Only ask them, and

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you will hear what they say. Oh, he is a bad boy, this Love; you must never have anything to do with him. He is after every one. Only think, once he shot an arrow at old grand-mama; but that was a long time ago. The wound has indeed healed long since, but she will never forget it. Fie on that wicked Love! But now you know him, and what a naughty boy he is.



XXXVII

THE GIRL WHO TROD UPON BREAD

YOU have doubtless heard of the girl who trod upon bread, not to soil her pretty shoes, and what evil this brought upon her. The tale is both written and printed.

She was a poor child, but proud and vain. She had a bad disposition, people said. When she was a little more than an infant it was a pleasure to her to catch flies, to pull off their wings, and so make them creepers entirely. She used, when somewhat older, to take lady-birds and beetles, stick them all upon a pin, then put a large leaf or a piece of paper close to their feet, so that the poor things held fast to it and turned and twisted in their endeavors to get off the pin.

“Now read, lady-birds!” said little Inger.
“See how they turn the paper!”

As she grew older she became worse instead of better; but she was very beautiful, and that was her misfortune. She

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would have been punished otherwise; and in the long run she was.

"You will bring evil on your own head," said her mother. "As a little child you used often to tear my aprons; I fear that when you are older you will break my heart."

And she did so sure enough.

At length she went into the country to wait on people of distinction. They were as kind to her as if she had been one of their own family; and she was so well dressed that she looked very pretty and became extremely arrogant.

When she had been a year in service her employers said to her:

"You should go and visit your relations, little Inger."

She went, resolved to let them see how fine she had become. When, however, she reached the village and saw the lads and lasses gossiping together near the pond, and her mother sitting close by on a stone resting her head against a bundle of fire-wood which she had picked up in the forest, Inger turned back. She felt ashamed that she, who was dressed so smartly, should have for her mother such a ragged creature, one who gathered sticks for her fire. It gave her no concern that she was expected—she was so vexed.

A half-year more had passed.

"You must go home some day and see your old parents, little Inger," said the mistress of the house. "Here is a large loaf of white bread—you can carry this to them; they will be rejoiced to see you."

And Inger put on her best clothes and her nice new shoes, and she lifted her dress high, and walked so carefully, that she might not soil her garments or her feet. There was no harm at all in that. But when she came to where the path went over some damp, marshy ground, and there were water and mud in the way, she threw the bread into the mud in order to step upon it and get over with dry shoes; but just as she had placed one foot on the bread and had lifted the other up the bread sank in with her deeper and deeper till she went

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entirely down, and nothing was to be seen but a black, bubbling pool.

That is the story.

What became of the girl? She went below to the Moor Woman who brews down there. The Moor Woman is an aunt of the fairies. *They* are very well known. Many poems have been written about them, and they have been printed, but nobody knows anything more of the Moor Woman than that when the meadows and the ground begin to reek in summer it is the old woman below who is brewing. Into her brewery it was that Inger sank, and no one could hold out very long there. A cesspool is a charming apartment compared with the old Moor Woman's brewery. Every vessel is redolent of horrible smells, which would make any human being faint, and they are packed closely together and over one another; but even if there were a small space among them which one might creep through it would be impossible, on account of all the slimy toads and snakes that are always crawling and forcing themselves through. Into this place little Inger sank. All this nauseous mess was so ice-cold that she shivered in every limb. Yes, she became stiffer and stiffer. The bread stuck fast to her, and it drew her as an amber bead draws a slender thread.

The Moor Woman was at home. The brewery was that day visited by the devil and his dam, and she was a venomous old creature who was never idle. She never went out without having some needlework with her. She had brought some there. She was sewing running leather to put into the shoes of human beings so that they should never be at rest. She embroidered lies, and worked up into mischief and discord thoughtless words that would otherwise have fallen to the ground. Yes, she knew how to sew and embroider, and transfer with a vengeance, that old grandam.

She beheld Inger, put on her spectacles, and looked at her.

"That is a girl with talents," said she. "I shall ask for her as a *souvenir* of my visit here; she may do very well as a statue

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to ornament my great-grandchildren's antechamber." And she took her.

It was thus little Inger went to the infernal regions. People do not generally go straight through the air to them—they can go by a roundabout path when they know the way.

It was an antechamber in an infinity. One became giddy there at looking forward, and giddy at looking backward, and there stood a crowd of anxious, pining beings who were waiting and hoping for the time when the gates of grace should be opened. They would have long to wait. Hideous large, waddling spiders wove thousands of webs over their feet; and these webs were like gins or foot-screws, and held them as fast as chains of iron and were a cause of disquiet to every soul—a painful annoyance. Misers stood there and lamented that they had forgotten the keys of their money-chests. It would be too tiresome to repeat all the complaints and troubles that were poured forth there. Inger thought it shocking to stand there like a statue; she was, as it were, fastened to the ground by the bread.

"This comes of wishing to have clean shoes," said she to herself. "See how they all stare at me!"

Yes, they did all stare at her; their evil passions glared from their eyes, and spoke, without sound, from the corners of their mouths. They were frightful.

"It must be a pleasure to them to see me," thought little Inger. "I have a pretty face and am well dressed"; and she dried her eyes. She had not lost her conceit. She had not then perceived how her fine clothes had been soiled in the brew-house of the Moor Woman. Her dress was covered with dabs of nasty matter; a snake had wound itself among her hair, and it dangled over her neck; and from every fold in her garment peeped out a toad, that puffed like an asthmatic lap-dog. It was very disagreeable. "But all the rest down here look horrid, too," was the reflection with which she consoled herself.

But the worst of all was the dreadful hunger she felt. Could she not stoop down and break off a piece of the bread on which



“THIS COMES OF WISHING TO HAVE CLEAN SHOES”

FAIRY TALES

she was standing? No; her back was stiffened; her hands and arms were stiffened; her whole body was like a statue of stone. She could only move her eyes, and these she could turn entirely round, and that was an ugly sight. And flies came and crept over her eyes backward and forward. She winked her eyes, but the intruders did not fly away, for they could not—their wings had been pulled off. That was another misery added to the hunger—the gnawing hunger that was so terrible to bear!

“If this goes on I cannot hold out much longer,” she said.

But she had to hold out, and her sufferings became greater.

Then a warm tear fell upon her head. It trickled over her face and her neck, all the way down to the bread. Another tear fell, then many followed. Who was weeping over little Inger? Had she not a mother up yonder on the earth? The tears of anguish which a mother sheds over her erring child always reach it; but they do not comfort the child—they burn, they increase the suffering. And oh! this intolerable hunger; yet not to be able to snatch one mouthful of the bread she was treading under foot! She became as thin, as slender as a reed. Another trial was that she heard distinctly all that was said of her above on the earth, and it was nothing but blame and evil. Though her mother wept and was in much affliction, she still said:

“Pride goes before a fall. That was your great fault, Inger. Oh, how miserable you have made your mother!”

Her mother and all who were acquainted with her were well aware of the sin she had committed in treading upon bread. They knew that she had sunk into the bog, and was lost; the cowherd had told that, for he had seen it himself from the brow of the hill.

“What affliction you have brought on your mother, Inger!” exclaimed her mother. “Ah, well! I expected no better from you.”

“Would that I had never been born!” thought Inger; “that would have been much better for me. My mother’s whimpering can do no good now.”

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She heard how the family, the people of distinction who had been so kind to her spoke. "She was a wicked child," they said; "she valued not the gifts of our Lord, but trod them under her feet. It will be difficult for her to get the gates of grace open to admit her."

"They ought to have brought me up better," thought Inger. "They should have taken the whims out of me, if I had any."

She heard that there was a common ballad made about her, "the bad girl who trod upon bread to keep her shoes nicely clean," and this ballad was sung from one end of the country to the other.

"That any one should have to suffer so much for such as that—be punished so severely for such a trifle!" thought Inger. "All these others are punished justly, for no doubt there was a great deal to punish; but ah, how I suffer!"

And her heart became still harder than the substance into which she had been turned.

"No one can be better in such society. I will not grow better here. See how they glare at me."

And her heart became still harder, and she felt a hatred toward all mankind.

"They have a nice story to tell up there now! Oh, how I suffer!"

She listened and heard them telling her history as a warning to children, and the little ones called her "ungodly Inger." "She was so naughty," they said, "so very wicked, that she deserved to suffer."

The children always spoke harshly of her. One day, however, that hunger and misery were gnawing her most dreadfully, and she heard her name mentioned and her story told to an innocent child—a little girl—she observed that the child burst into tears in her distress for the proud, finely dressed Inger.

"But will she never come up again?" asked the child.

The answer was:

"She will never come up again."

"But if she will beg pardon and promise never to be naughty again?"

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“But she will *not* beg pardon,” they said.

“Oh, how I wish she would do it!” sobbed the little girl, in great distress. “I will give my doll, and my doll’s house, too, if she may come up! It is so shocking for poor little Inger to be down there.”

These words touched Inger’s heart; they seemed almost to make her good. It was the first time any one had said “poor Inger” and had not dwelt upon her faults. An innocent child cried and prayed for her. She was so much affected by this that she felt inclined to weep herself, but she could not, and this was an additional pain.

Years passed on in the earth above, but down where she was there was no change, except that she heard more and more rarely sounds from above, and that she was herself was more seldom mentioned. At last one day she heard a sigh, and “Inger, Inger, how miserable you have made me! I foretold that you would!” These were her mother’s last words on her death-bed.

And again she heard herself named by her former employers, and her mistress said:

“Perhaps I may meet you once more, Inger. None know whither they are to go.”

But Inger knew full well that her excellent mistress would never come to the place where *she* was.

Time passed on and on, slowly and wretchedly. Then once more Inger heard her name mentioned, and she beheld as it were, directly above her, two clear stars shining. These were two mild eyes that were closing upon earth. So many years had elapsed since a little girl had cried in childish sorrow over “poor Inger” that that child had become an old woman, whom our Lord was now about to call to Himself. At that hour, when the thoughts and the actions of a whole life stand in review before the parting soul, she remembered how, as a little child, she had wept bitterly on hearing the history of Inger. That time and those feelings stood so prominently before the woman’s mind in the hour of death that she cried with intense emotion:

“Lord, my God! have not I often, like Inger, trod under

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foot Thy blessed gifts and placed no value on them? Have I not often been guilty of pride and vanity in my secret heart? But Thou, in Thy mercy, didst not let me sink; Thou didst hold me up. Oh, forsake me not in my last hour!"

And the aged woman's eyes closed, and her spirit's eyes opened to what had been formerly invisible; and as Inger had been present in her latest thoughts, she beheld her, and perceived how deep she had been dragged downward. At that sight the gentle being burst into tears; and in the kingdom of heaven she stood like a child, and wept for the fate of the unfortunate Inger. Her tears and her prayers sounded like an echo down in the hollow form that confined the imprisoned, miserable soul. That soul was overwhelmed with the unexpected love from those realms afar. One of God's angels wept for her! Why was this vouchsafed to her? The tortured spirit gathered, as it were, into one thought all the actions of its life, all that it had done; and it shook with the violence of its remorse—remorse such as Inger had never felt. Grief became her predominating feeling. She thought that for her the gates of mercy would never open, and as in deep contrition and self-abasement she thought thus a ray of brightness penetrated into the dismal abyss—a ray more vivid and glorious than the sunbeams which thaw the snow figures that the children make in their gardens. And this ray, more quickly than the snowflake that falls upon a child's warm mouth can be melted into a drop of water, caused Inger's petrified figure to evaporate, and a little bird arose, following the zigzag course of the ray, up toward the world that mankind inhabit. But it seemed afraid and shy of everything around it; it felt ashamed of itself; and, apparently wishing to avoid all living creatures, it sought in haste concealment in a dark recess in a crumbling wall. Here it sat, and it crept into the farthest corner, trembling all over. It could not sing, for it had no voice. For a long time it sat quietly there before it ventured to look out and behold all the beauty around. Yes, it was beauty! The air was so fresh, yet so soft, the moon shone so clearly, the trees and the flowers scented

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so sweetly, and it was so comfortable where she sat—her feather garb so clean and nice. How all creation told of love and glory! The grateful thoughts that awoke in the bird's breast she would willingly have poured forth in song, but the power was denied to her. Yes, gladly would she have sung as do the cuckoo and the nightingale in spring. Our gracious Lord, who hears the mute worm's hymn of praise, understood the thanksgiving that lifted itself up in the tones of thought, as the psalm floated in David's mind before it resolved itself into words and melody.

As weeks passed on, these unexpressed feelings of gratitude increased. They would surely find a voice some day, with the first stroke of the wing, to perform some good act. Might not this happen?

Now came the holy Christmas festival. The peasants raised a pole close by the old wall and bound an unthreshed bundle of oats on it, that the birds of the air might also enjoy the Christmas and have plenty to eat at that time which was held in commemoration of the redemption brought to mankind.

And the sun rose brightly that Christmas morning and shone upon the oat-sheaf, and upon all the chirping birds that flew around the pole; and from the wall issued a faint twittering. The swelling thoughts had at last found vent, and the low sound was a hymn of joy as the bird flew forth from its hiding-place.

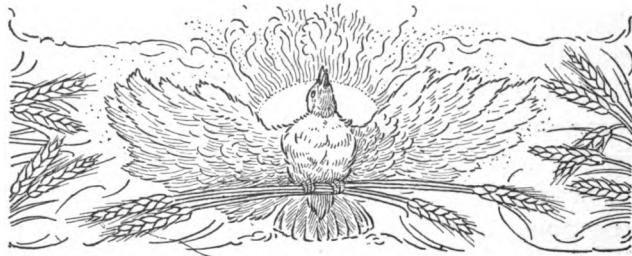
The winter was an unusually severe one. The waters were frozen thickly over; the birds and the wild animals in the woods had great difficulty in obtaining food. The little bird, that had so recently left its dark solitude, flew about the country roads, and when it found by chance a little corn dropped in the ruts it would eat only a single grain itself, while it called all the starving sparrows to partake of it. It would also fly to the villages and towns and look well about, and where kind hands had strewed crumbs of bread outside the windows for the birds it would eat only one morsel itself and give all the rest to the others.

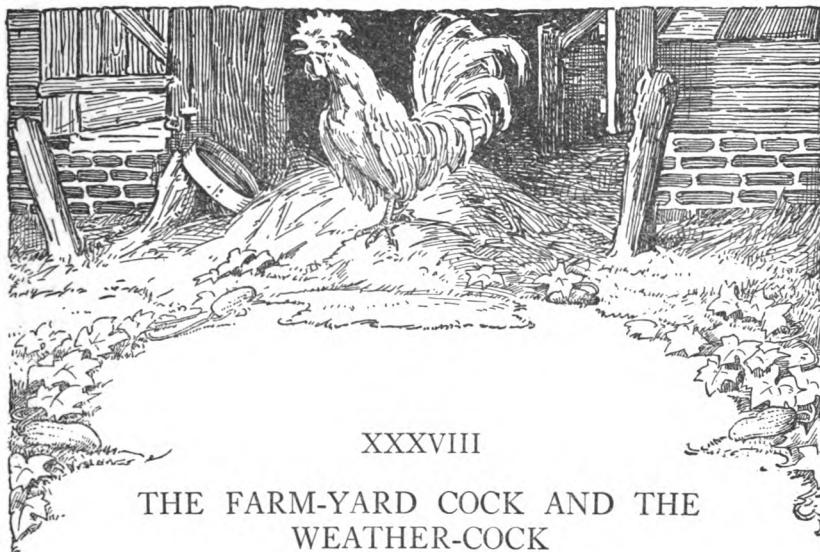
At the end of the winter the bird had found and given away so many crumbs of bread that the number put together would

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have weighed as much as the loaf upon which little Inger had trodden in order to save her fine shoes from being soiled; and when she had found and given away the very last crumb, the gray wings of the bird became white and expanded wonderfully.

"It is flying over the sea!" exclaimed the children who saw the white bird. Now it seemed to dip into the ocean, now it arose into the clear sunshine; it glittered in the air; it disappeared high, high above, and the children said that it had flown up to the sun.





XXXVIII

THE FARM-YARD COCK AND THE
WEATHER-COCK

HERE were two cocks—one on the dunghill, the other on the roof. Both were conceited; but which of the two did most? Tell us your opinion; but we shall keep our own, nevertheless.

The poultry-yard was divided by a partition of boards from another yard, in which lay a manure-heap, and on it lay and grew a great cucumber, which was fully conscious of being a forcing-bed plant.

“That’s a privilege of birth,” the Cucumber said to herself. “Not all can be born cucumbers—there must be other kinds, too. The fowls, the ducks, and all the cattle in the neighbouring yard are creatures, too. I now look up to the Yard Cock on the partition. He certainly is of very much greater consequence than the Weather-cock, who is so highly placed, and who can’t even creak, much less crow; and he has neither hens nor chickens, and thinks only of himself, and perspires verdigris. But the Yard Cock—he’s something like a cock! His gait is like a dance, his crowing is music; and wherever he comes it is known directly. What a trumpeter he is! If he would only come in here! Even if he were to eat me up, stalk and all, it would be quite a blissful death,” said the Cucumber.

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In the night the weather became very bad. Hens, chickens, and even the Cock himself, sought shelter. The wind blew down the partition between the two yards with a crash; the tiles came tumbling down, but the Weather-cock sat firm. He did not even turn round; he could not turn round; and yet he was young and newly cast, but steady and sedate. He had been "born old," and did not at all resemble the birds that fly beneath the vault of heaven, such as the sparrows and the swallows. He despised those, considering them piping birds of trifling stature—ordinary song-birds. The pigeons, he allowed, were big and shining, and gleamed like mother-o'-pearl, and looked like a kind of weather-cock; but then they were fat and stupid, and their whole endeavor was to fill themselves with food.

"Moreover, they are such tedious things to converse with," said the Weather-cock.

The birds of passage had also paid a visit to the Weather-cock and told him tales of foreign lands—of airy caravans and exciting robber stories of encounters with birds of prey; and that was interesting for the first time, but the Weather-cock knew that afterward they always repeated themselves, and that was tedious.

"They are tedious, and all is tedious," he said. "No one is fit to associate with, and one and all of them are wearisome and stupid. The world is worth nothing," he cried. "The whole thing is a stupidity."

The Weather-cock was what is called "used up"; and that quality would certainly have made him interesting in the eyes of the Cucumber, if she had known it; but she had only eyes for the Yard Cock, who had now actually come into her own yard.

The wind had blown down the plank, but the storm had passed over.

"What do you think of *that* crowing?" inquired the Yard Cock of his hens and chickens. "It was a little rough—the elegance was wanting."

And hens and chickens stepped upon the muck-heap, and the Cock strutted to and fro upon it like a knight.

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“Garden plant!” he cried out to the Cucumber; and in this one word she understood his deep feeling and forgot that he was pecking at her and eating her up—a happy death!

And the hens came, and the chickens came, and when one of them runs the rest run also; they clucked and chirped and looked at the Cock, and were proud that he was of their kind.

“Cock-a-doodle-doo!” he crowed. “The chickens will grow up to be large fowls if I make a noise in the poultry-yard of the world.”

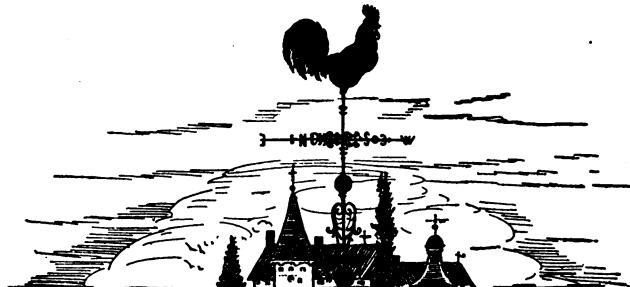
And hens and chickens clucked and chirped, and the Cock told them a great piece of news:

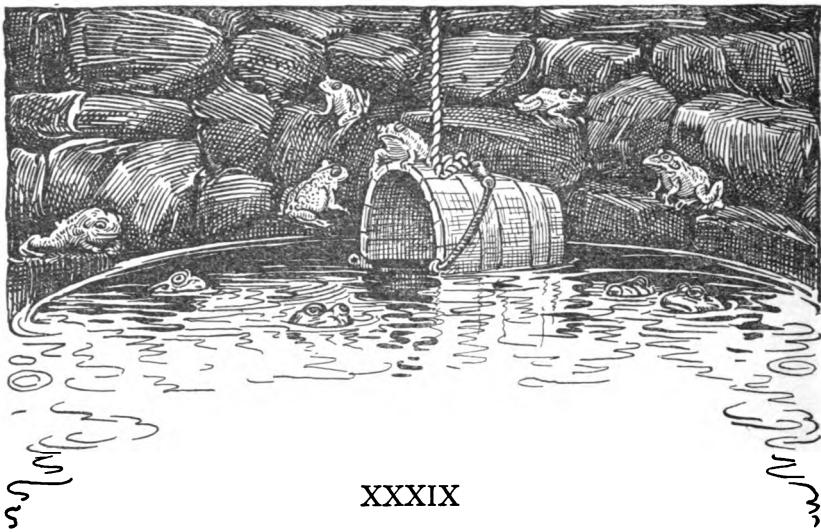
“A cock can lay an egg; and do you know what there is in that egg? In that egg lies a basilisk. Men know that, and now you know it, too—you know what is in me, and what a cock of the world I am.”

And with this the Yard Cock flapped his wings and made his comb swell up and crowed again; and all of them shuddered—all the hens and the chickens; but they were proud that one of their people should be such a cock of the world. They clucked and chirped, so that the Weather-cock heard it; and he heard it, but he never stirred.

“It’s all stupid stuff!” said a voice within the Weather-cock. “The Yard Cock does not lay eggs, and I am too lazy to lay any. If I liked, I could lay a wind-egg, but the world is not worth a wind-egg. And now I don’t like even to sit here any longer.”

And with this the Weather-cock broke off; but he did not kill the Yard Cock, though he intended to do so, as the hens declared. And what does the moral say? “Better to crow than to be ‘used up’ and break off.”





XXXIX

THE TOAD

THE well was deep, and so the rope was long, and the wheel went heavily round before one could hoist the bucket over the side of the well. The sun could not see its face in the water, however brightly it shone, but as far as it could shine there were green weeds growing between the stones.

A family of the toad race dwelt here. They were emigrants; indeed, they had all come plump down in the person of the old toad-mother, who was still alive. The green frogs who swam in the water had been at home here ever so much longer, but they acknowledged their cousins, and called them the "well-guests." The latter, however, had no thoughts of ever flitting; they made themselves very comfortable here on the dry land, as they called the wet stones.

Dame Frog had once traveled, riding in the bucket as it went up; but the light was too much for her, and gave her spasm in the eyes; luckily, she got out of the bucket. She fell with a frightful splash in the water, and lay up for three days with the backache. She had not much to tell about the upper world, but one thing she did know, and so did all the others now—that the well was not the whole world. Dame Toad might have told

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them a thing or two more, but she never answered any questions, and so they left off asking any.

“Nasty, ugly, squat, and fat she is!” said the young Green Frogs; “and her brats are getting just like her.”

“Maybe so!” said Dame Toad, “but one of them has a jewel in its head, or else I have it myself.”

The Green Frogs listened and stared, and, as they did not like to hear that, they made faces and went to the bottom. But the young Toads stretched their hind legs out of sheer pride. Each of them thought it had the jewel, and so they all kept their heads quite still; but at last they began to ask what sort of a thing they had to be proud of, and what a jewel *was* exactly.

“It is something so splendid and so precious,” said Dame Toad, “that I cannot describe it; it is something that one wears to please one’s self and that others fret to death after. But don’t ask questions; I sha’n’t answer them.”

“Well, I have not got the jewel,” said the smallest Toad, which was as ugly as ugly could be. “How should I have anything so splendid? And if it vexed others, why, it could not please me. No; all I want is to get up to the well-side and have one peep out; that would be glorious!”

“Better stay where you are,” said the old one. “Here you are at home, and you know what it’s like. Keep clear of the bucket or it may squash you. And even if you get safe into it you may fall out again, and it is not every one that can fall so luckily as I did and keep legs and eggs all safe and sound.”

“Quack!” said the little one; and that means the same as when we men say “Alack!”

It did so long to get up to the well-side and look out; it felt quite a yearning after the green things up yonder. And so next morning, as the bucket was going up, when it happened to stop for an instant before the stone where the Toad sat, the little creature quivered through and through and edged into the bucket. It sank to the bottom of the water, which was presently drawn up and poured out.

“Phuh, botheration!” said the man, when he saw it; “it is

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the ugliest I have ever seen." He kicked with his wooden shoe at the Toad, which was near being crippled, but managed to escape into the middle of some tall stinging-nettles. It saw stalks side by side around it, and it looked upward too. The sun shone on the leaves; they were quite transparent. For the Toad it was the same as it is for us men when we come all at once into a great forest where the sun is shining between leaves and branches.

"It is much prettier here than down in the well! One might well stop here for one's whole lifetime," said the little Toad. It lay there one hour, it lay there two. "Now I wonder what there is outside; as I have gone so far, I may as well go farther." And it crawled as fast as it could crawl, till it came out into the full sunshine and got powdered with dust as it marched across a high-road.

"This is something like being on dry land," said the Toad. "I am getting almost too much of a good thing; it tickles right into me."

Now it came to a ditch; the forget-me-not grew here, and the meadow-sweet; beyond it was a hedge of white-thorn and elder-bushes, and the convolvulus crept and hung about it. Here were fine colors to be seen! And yonder flew a butterfly. The Toad thought that it was a flower which had broken loose in order to look about it in the world; it really seemed so very natural.

"If one could only get along like that!" said the Toad. "Quack—alack! Oh, how glorious!"

For eight days and nights it lingered by the ditch and felt no want of food. The ninth day it thought, "Farther—forward!" But was there anything more beautiful to be found then? Perhaps a little toad or some green frogs; there had been a sound in the wind last night as if there were "cousins" in the neighborhood.

"It is a fine thing to live—to come up out of the well, to lie in stinging-nettles, to creep along a dusty road, and to rest in a wet ditch! But forward still; let us find out frogs or a little



INVITED TO A FAMILY CONCERT

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toad; one cannot do without them, after all; nature, by itself, is not enough for one!" And so it set out again on its wanderings.

It came to a field and a large pond with rushes round it; it took a look inside.

"It is too wet for you here, isn't it?" said the Frogs, "but you are quite welcome. Are you a he or a she?—not that it matters; you are welcome all the same."

And so it was invited to a concert in the evening—a family concert, great excitement and thin voices—we all know that sort of thing. There were no refreshments except drink; but that was free to all—the whole pond, if they pleased.

"Now I shall travel farther," said the little Toad. It was always craving after something better.

It saw the stars twinkle, so large and so clear; it saw the new moon shine; it saw the sun rise higher and higher.

"I think I am still in the well, in a larger well; I must get higher up! I feel a restlessness, a longing!" And when the moon had grown full and round the poor creature thought: "Can *that* be the bucket which is being let down, and which I must pop into if I wish to get higher up? Or is the sun the great bucket? How great it is, and how beaming! It could hold all of us together. I must watch for my opportunity. What a brightness in my head! I do not believe that the jewel can shine better. The jewel! I have it not, and shall not cry after it. No; higher still in glitter and gladness! I feel an assurance, and yet a fear; it is a hard step to take, but it must be taken. Forward! right on along the highroad!"

And it stepped out as well as such a crawling creature can till it came to the great thoroughfare where the men lived. Here there were flower gardens and cabbage gardens. It turned aside to rest in a cabbage garden.

"What a number of different beings there are which I know nothing about, and how great and blessed is the world! But one must keep looking about one instead of sitting always in the same corner." And so it sidled into the cabbage garden. "How green it is here, how pretty it is here!"

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"That I know well enough," said the Caterpillar, on the leaf. "My leaf is the largest here; it covers half the world—but as for the world, I can do without it."

"Cluck! cluck!" said somebody, and fowls came tripping into the cabbage garden. The foremost hen was long-sighted; she spied out the worm on the curly leaf and pecked at it so that it fell to the ground, where it lay twisting and turning. The Hen looked first with one eye and then with the other, for she could not make out what was to be the end of all this wiggling.

"It does not do this of its own accord," thought the Hen, and lifted her head for a finishing-stroke. The Toad grew so frightened that it crawled right up against the Hen.

"So it has friends to fight for it," said she; "just look at the crawler!" And the Hen turned tail. "I sha'n't trouble myself about the little green mouthful; it only gives one a tickling in the throat." The other fowls were of the same opinion, and away they went.

"I have wriggled away from her," said the Caterpillar; "it is good to have presence of mind; but the hardest task remains, to get up onto my cabbage-leaf. Where is it?"

And the little Toad came forward and expressed its sympathies. It was glad of its own ugliness that had frightened away the Hen.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Caterpillar. "I got rid of her myself, I tell you. You are very unpleasant to look at! Mayn't I be allowed to get back into my own? Now I smell cabbage. Now I am near my leaf. There is nothing so beautiful as what is one's own. I must go higher up still."

"Yes, higher up!" said the little Toad; "higher up! It feels just as I feel; but it is not in good humor to-day; that comes of the fright. We all wish to get higher up." And it looked up as high as it could.

The stork sat in his nest on the farmer's roof; he clattered, and the stork-mother clattered.

"How high they live!" thought the Toad. "Pity that one can't get up there."

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There were two young students lodging in the farm-house; one of them was a poet, the other a naturalist. The one sang and wrote in gladness of all that God had created, even as its image was reflected in his heart; he sang it out short and clear, and rich in resounding verses. The other took hold of the thing itself; aye, and split it up if necessary. He treated our Lord's creation like some vast piece of arithmetic; he subtracted, multiplied, wished to know it outside and inside, and to talk of it with reason, nothing but reason; and he talked of it in gladness, too, and cleverly. They were good, glad-hearted men, both of them.

"Yonder sits a fine specimen of a toad," said the Naturalist; "I must have it in spirit."

"You have two already," said the Poet. "Let it sit in peace and enjoy itself."

"But it is so beautifully ugly!" said the other.

"Yes, if we could find the jewel in its head," said the Poet, "then I myself might lend a hand in splitting it up."

"The jewel!" said the other. "Much you know about natural history!"

"But is there not something very fine, at least, in the popular belief that the toad, the ugliest of creatures, often hides in its head the most precious of all jewels? Is it not much the same with men? Was there not such a jewel hidden in *Æsop* and *Socrates*, too?"

The Toad heard nothing more; and even so far it did not understand half of it. The two friends went on, and it escaped being put into spirit.

"They were talking about the jewel, too," said the Toad. "I am just as well without it; otherwise I should have got into trouble."

There was a clattering upon the farmer's roof. Father Stork was delivering a lecture to his family while they all looked down askant at the two young men in the cabbage garden.

"Man is the most conceited of creatures," said the Stork. "Hark, how they are going on—clatter, clatter—and yet they cannot rattle off a regular tattoo. They puff themselves up

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with notions of their eloquence—their language. A rare language indeed; it shifts from one jabber to another, at every day's journey. Our language we can talk the whole world over, whether in Denmark or in Egypt. As for flying, they can't manage it at all. They push along by means of a contrivance which they call a railway, but there they often get their necks broken. It gives me the shivers in my bill when I think of it. The world can exist without men. What good are they to us? All that we want are frogs and earth-worms."

"That was a grand speech now," thought the little Toad. "What a great man he is, and how high he sits—higher than I have ever seen any one before; and how well he can swim!" it exclaimed, as the Stork took flight through the air with out-stretched wings.

And Mother Stork talked in the nest. She told of the land of Egypt, of the water of the Nile, and of the first-rate mud that was to be found in foreign parts; it sounded quite fresh and charming in the ears of the little Toad.

"I must go to Egypt," it said. "Oh, if the Stork would only give me a lift, or one of the young ones might take me. I would do the youngster some service in my turn on his wedding-day. I am sure I shall get to Egypt, for I am so lucky; and all the longing and the yearning which I feel; surely this is better than having a jewel in one's head."

And it had it—the true jewel; the eternal longing and yearning to go upward, ever upward. This was the jewel, and it shone within it, shone with gladness and beamed with desire.

At that very moment came the Stork. He had seen the Toad in the grass, and he swooped down and took hold of the little creature, not over-tenderly. The bill pinched; the wind whistled; it was not quite comfortable. But still it was going upward and away to Egypt, it knew; and that was why its eyes glittered till it seemed as if a spark flew out of them.

"Quack—ack!"

The body was dead, the Toad was killed. But the spark out of its eyes, what became of that?

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The sunbeam took it; the sunbeam bore away the jewel from the head of the Toad. Whither?

You must not ask the Naturalist; rather ask the Poet. He will tell it you as a fairy tale; and the Caterpillar will take a share in it, and the Stork family will take a share in it. Think, the Caterpillar will be changed and become a beautiful butterfly! The Stork family will fly over mountains and seas far away to Africa, and yet find the shortest way home again to the Danish land, to the same spot, to the same roof! Yes, it is all nearly too much like a fairy tale—and yet it is true. You may fairly ask the Naturalist about the truth of it; he will admit *that*; and, indeed, you know it yourself, for you have seen it.

But the jewel in the Toad's head? Look for it in the sun; look *at* it if you can.

The splendor is too strong. We have not yet eyes that can look into all the glories which God hath revealed; but some day we shall have them, and that will be the most beautiful fairy tale of all, for we ourselves shall take a share in it.





XL

THE HAPPY FAMILY

THE biggest leaf here in the country is certainly the burdock leaf. Put one in front of your waist, and it's just like an apron; and if you lay it upon your head it is almost as good as an umbrella, for it is quite remarkably large. A burdock never grows alone; where there is one tree there are several more. It's splendid to behold! and all this splendor is snails' meat—the great white snails which the grand people in old times used to have made into fricassees; and when they had eaten them they would say, "H'm! how good that is!" for they had the idea that it tasted delicious. These snails lived on burdock leaves, and that's why burdocks were sown.

Now there was an old estate on which people ate snails no longer. The snails had died out, but the burdocks had not. These latter grew and grew on all the walks and in all the beds—there was no stopping them; the place became a complete forest of burdocks. Here and there stood an apple or a plum tree; but for this nobody would have thought a garden had been there. Everything was burdock, and among the burdocks lived the last two ancient Snails.

They did not know themselves how old they were, but they could very well remember that there had been a great many more of them, that they had descended from a foreign family, and that the whole forest had been planted for them and theirs.

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They had never been away from home, but it was known to them that something existed in the world called the manor-house, and that there one was boiled, and one became black and was laid upon a silver dish; but what was done afterward they did not know. Moreover, they could not imagine what that might be, being boiled and laid upon a silver dish; but it was stated to be fine and particularly grand! Neither the Cockchafer, nor the Toad, nor the Earthworm, whom they questioned about it, could give them any information, for none of their own kind had ever been boiled and laid on silver dishes.

The old white Snails were the grandest in the world; they knew that! The forest was there for their sake, and the manor-house, too, so that they might be boiled and laid on silver dishes.

They led a very retired and happy life; and, as they themselves were childless, they had adopted a little common Snail, which they brought up as their own child. But the little thing would not grow, for it was only a common Snail, though the old people, and particularly the Mother, declared one could easily see how he grew. And when the Father could not see it she requested him to feel the little Snail's shell; and he felt it, and acknowledged that she was right.

One day it rained very hard.

"Listen how it's drumming on the burdock leaves—rum-dum-dum! rum-dum-dum!" said the Father Snail.

"That's what I call drops," said the Mother. "It's coming straight down the stalks. You'll see it will be wet here directly. I'm only glad that we have our good houses, and that the little one has his own. There has been more done for us than for any other creature; one can see very plainly that we are the grand folks of the world! We have houses from our birth, and the burdock forest has been planted for us; I should like to know how far it extends and what lies beyond it."

"There's nothing," said the Father Snail, "that can be better than here at home; I have nothing at all to wish for."

"Yes," said the Mother; "I should like to be taken to the manor-house and boiled and laid upon a silver dish; that has

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been done to all our ancestors, and you may be sure it's quite a distinguished honor."

"The manor-house has perhaps fallen in," said the Father Snail, "or the forest of burdocks may have grown over it so that the people can't get out at all. You need not be in a hurry—but you always hurry so, and the little one is beginning just the same way. Has not he been creeping up that stalk these three days? My head quite aches when I look up at him."

"You must not scold him," said the Mother Snail. "He crawls very deliberately. We shall have much joy in him; and we old people have nothing else to live for. But have you ever thought where we shall get a wife for him? Don't you think that farther in the wood there may be some more of our kind?"

"There may be black snails there, I think," said the old man—"black snails without houses!—but they're too vulgar. And they're conceited, for all that. But we can give the commission to the ants; they run to and fro as if they had business; they're sure to know of a wife for our young gentleman."

"I certainly know the most beautiful of brides," said one of the Ants; "but I fear she would not do, for she is the Queen!"

"That does not matter," said the two old Snails. "Has she a house?"

"She has a castle!" replied the Ant—"the most beautiful ant's castle, with seven hundred passages."

"Thank you," said the Mother Snail; "our boy shall not go into an ant-hill. If you know of nothing better we'll give the commission to the White Gnats; they fly far about in rain and sunshine, and they know the burdock wood inside and outside."

"We have a wife for him," said the Gnats. "A hundred man-steps from here a little Snail with a house is sitting on a gooseberry-bush; she is quite alone, and old enough to marry. It's only a hundred man-steps from here."

"Yes, let her come to him," said the old people. "He has a whole burdock forest, and she has only a bush."

And so they brought the little maiden Snail. Eight days passed before she arrived, but that was the rare circumstance

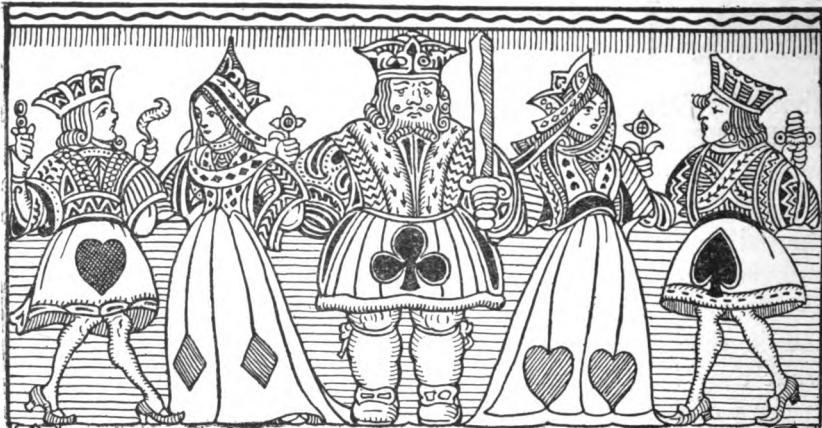
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about it, for by this one could see that she was of the right kind.

And then they had a wedding. Six glow-worms lighted as well as they could; with this exception it went very quietly, for the old Snail people could not bear feasting and dissipation. But a capital speech was made by the Mother Snail. The father could not speak, he was so much moved. Then they gave the young couple the whole burdock forest for an inheritance, and said what they had always said—namely, that it was the best place in the world, and that the young people, if they lived honorably and increased and multiplied, would some day be taken with their children to the manor-house and boiled black and laid upon a silver dish. And when the speech was finished the old people crept into their houses and never came out again, for they slept.

The young Snail pair now ruled in the forest and had a numerous progeny. But as the young ones were never boiled and put on silver dishes, they concluded that the manor-house had fallen in and that all the people in the world had died out. And as nobody contradicted them, they must have been right. And the rain fell down upon the burdock leaves to play the drum for them; and the sun shone to color the burdock forest for them; and they were happy, very happy—the whole family was happy, uncommonly happy!





THE COURT CARDS

HOW many beautiful things may be cut out of and pasted on paper! Thus a castle was cut out and pasted, so large that it filled a whole table, and it was painted as if it were built of red stones. It had a shining copper roof, it had towers and a drawbridge, water in the canals just like plate-glass, for it was plate-glass, and in the highest tower stood a wooden watchman. He had a trumpet, but he did not blow it.

The whole belonged to a little boy whose name was William. He raised the drawbridge himself and let it down again, made his tin soldiers march over it, opened the castle gate and looked into the large and elegant drawing-room, where all the court cards of a pack—Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Spades—hung in frames on the walls like pictures in real drawing-rooms. The kings held each a scepter and wore crowns; the queens wore veils flowing down over their shoulders, and in their hands they held a flower or a fan; the knaves had halberds and nodding plumes.

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One evening the little boy peeped through the open castle gate to catch a glimpse of the court cards in the drawing-room, and it seemed to him that the kings saluted him with their scepters, that the Queen of Spades swung the golden tulip which she held in her hand, that the Queen of Hearts lifted her fan, and that all four queens graciously recognized him. He drew a little nearer in order to see better, and that made him hit his head against the castle so that it shook. Then all the four knaves of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Spades raised their halberds to warn him that he must not try to get in that way.

The little boy understood the hint and gave a friendly nod; he nodded again, and then said, "Say something!" but the knaves did not say a word. However, the third time he nodded the Knave of Hearts sprang out of the card and placed himself in the middle of the floor.

"What is your name?" the Knave asked the little boy. "You have clear eyes and good teeth, but your hands are dirty; you do not wash them often enough!"

Now this was rather coarse language, but of course not much politeness can be expected from a knave. He is only a common fellow.

"My name is William," said the little boy, "and the castle is mine, and you are my Knave of Hearts!"

"No, I am not. I am my king's and my queen's knave, not yours!" said the Knave of Hearts. "I am not obliged to stay here. I can get down off the card, and out of the frame, too, and so can my gracious king and queen, even more easily than I. We can go out into the wide world, but that is such a wearisome march; we have grown tired of it; it is more convenient, more easy, more agreeable, to be sitting in the cards and just to be ourselves."

"Have all of you really been human beings once?" asked little William.

"Human beings!" repeated the Knave of Hearts. "Yes, we have; but not so good as we ought to have been! Please now light a little wax candle (I like a red one best, for that is the color

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of my king and queen); then I will tell the lord of the castle—I think you said you were the lord of the castle, did you not?—our whole history; but for goodness' sake don't interrupt me, for if I speak it must be done without any interruption whatever. I am in a great hurry. Do you see my king, I mean the King of Hearts? He is the oldest of the four kings there, for he was born first—born with a golden crown and a golden apple. He began to rule at once. His queen was born with a golden fan; that she still has. They both were very agreeably situated, even from infancy. They did not have to go to school, they could play the whole day, build castles and knock them down, marshal tin soldiers for battle, and play with dolls. When they asked for buttered bread then there was butter on both sides of the bread, and powdered brown sugar, too, nicely spread over it. It was the good old time, and was called the Golden Age; but they grew tired of it, and so did I. Then the King of Diamonds took the reins of government!"

The Knave said nothing more. Little William waited to hear something further, but not a syllable was uttered; so presently he asked, "Well, and then?"

The Knave of Hearts did not answer; he stood up straight, silent, bold, and stiff, his eyes fixed upon the burning wax candle. Little William nodded; he nodded again, but no reply. Then he turned to the Knave of Diamonds; and when he had nodded to him three times up he sprang out of the card in the middle of the floor, and uttered only two words:

"Wax candle!"

Little William understood what he meant, and immediately lighted a red candle and placed it before him. Then the Knave of Diamonds presented arms—for that is a token of respect—and said:

"Then the King of Diamonds succeeded to the throne. He was a king with a pane of glass on his breast; also the queen had a pane of glass on her breast, so that people could look right into her. For the rest they were formed like other human beings, and were so agreeable and so handsome that a monument was

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erected in honor of them which stood for seven years without falling. Properly speaking, it should have stood for ever, for so it was intended; but for some unknown reasons it fell." Then the Knave of Diamonds presented arms, out of respect for his king, and he looked fixedly on his red wax candle.

But now at once, without any nod or invitation from little William, the Knave of Clubs stepped out, grave and proud, like the stork that struts with such a dignified air over the green meadow. The black clover leaf in the corner of the card flew like a bird beyond the knave, and then flew back again and stuck itself where it had been sticking before. And without waiting for his wax candle the Knave of Clubs spoke:

"Not all get butter on both sides of the bread and brown powdered sugar on that. My king and queen did not get it. They had to go to school and learn what they had not learned before. They also had a pane of glass on their breasts, but nobody looked through it, except to see if there was not something wrong with their works inside, in order to find, if possible, some reason for giving them a scolding! I know it; I have served my king and queen all my lifetime; I know everything about them and obey their commands. They bid me say nothing more to-night. I keep silent, therefore, and present arms!"

But little William was a kind-hearted boy, so he lighted a candle for this knave also, a shining white one, white like snow. No sooner was the candle lighted than the Knave of Spades appeared in the middle of the drawing-room. He came hurriedly, yet he limped as if he had a sore leg. Indeed, it had once been broken, and he had had, moreover, many ups and downs in his life. He spoke as follows:

"My brother knaves have each got a candle, and I shall also get one; I know that. But if we poor knaves have so much honor our kings and queens must have thrice as much. Now it is proper that my King of Spades and my Queen of Spades should have *four* candles to gladden them. An additional honor ought to be conferred upon them. Their history and trials are so doleful that they have very good reason to wear mourning and to

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have a grave-digger's spade on their coat of arms. My own fate, poor knave that I am, is deplorable enough. In one game at cards I have got the nickname of 'Black Peter'¹ But, alas! I have got a still uglier name, which, indeed, it is hardly the thing to mention aloud," and then he whispered: "In another game I have been nicknamed 'Dirty Mads'² I, who was once the King of Spades' Lord Chamberlain! Is not this a bitter fate? The history of my royal master and queen I will not relate; they don't wish me to do so! Little lord of the castle, as he calls himself, may guess it himself if he chooses, but it is very lamentable—oh, no doubt about that! Their circumstances have become very much reduced, and are not likely to change for the better until we are all riding on the red horse higher than the skies, where there are no haps and mishaps."

Little William now lighted, as the Knave of Spades had said was proper, three candles for each of the kings, and three for each of the queens; but for the King and Queen of Spades he lighted an extra candle apiece, and the whole drawing-room became as light and transparent as the palace of the richest emperor, and the illustrious kings and queens bowed to one another serenely and graciously. The Queen of Hearts made her golden fan bow, and the Queen of Spades swung her golden tulip in such a way that a stream of fire issued from it. The royal couples alighted from the cards and frames and moved in a slow and graceful minuet up and down the floor. They were dancing in the very midst of flames, and the knaves were dancing too.

But, alas! the whole drawing-room was soon in a blaze; the devouring element roared up through the roof and all was one crackling and hissing sheet of fire, and in a moment little William's castle itself was enveloped in flames and smoke. The boy became frightened and ran off, crying to his father and mother:

¹ "Black Peter" is the name of a game in Denmark, where it is called "*Sorte Peer*," the word *sorte* denoting black. When the cards are dealt, he who happens to get the knave of spades is all the evening nicknamed Black Peter by his fellow-players, who paint his face black.

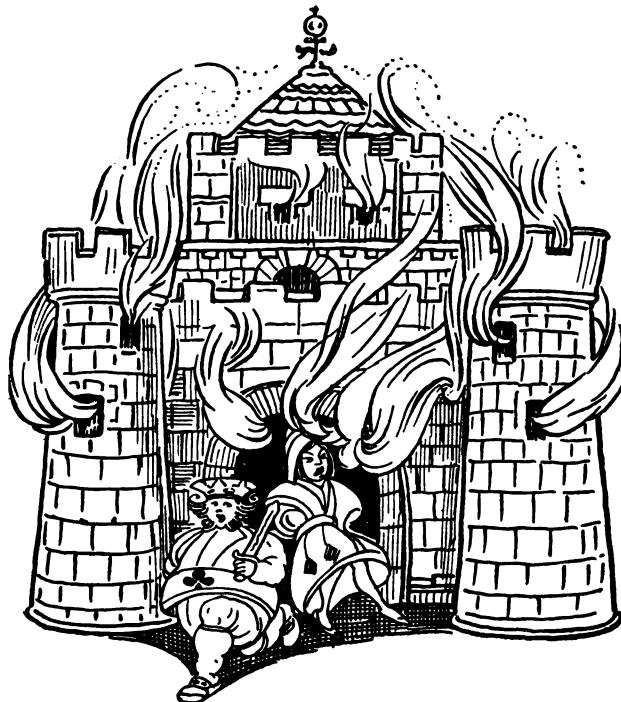
² "Dirty Mads" is another Danish game. "Mads" is a name almost exclusively in use amongst the peasantry.

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“Fire, fire, fire! my castle is on fire!” He grew pale as ashes, and his little hands trembled like the aspen-leaf. The fire continued sparkling and blazing, but in the midst of this destructive scene the following words were uttered in a singing tone:

“Now we are riding on the red horse, higher than the skies! This is the way for kings and queens to go, and this is the way for their knaves to go after them!”

Yes! that was the end of William’s castle and of the court cards. William did not perish in the flames; he is still alive, and he washed his small hands and said, “I am innocent of the destruction of the castle.” And, indeed, it was not his fault that the castle was burned down.





XLII

THE BEETLE

THE Emperor's favorite horse was shod with gold. It had a golden shoe on each of its feet.

And why was this?

He was a beautiful creature with delicate legs, bright, intelligent eyes, and a mane that hung down his neck like a veil. He had carried his master through the fire and smoke of battle, and heard the bullets whistling around him; had kicked, bitten, and taken part in the fight when the enemy advanced; and had sprung, with his master on his back, over the fallen foe and had saved the crown of red gold and the life of the Emperor, which was more valuable than the red gold; and that is why the Emperor's horse had golden shoes.

And the Beetle came creeping forth.

"First the great ones," said he, "and then the little ones; but greatness is not the only thing that does it." And so saying he stretched out his thin legs.

"And pray what do you want?" asked the Smith.

"Golden shoes," replied the Beetle.

"Why, you must be out of your senses!" cried the Smith.
"Do you want to have golden shoes, too?"

FAIRY TALES

“Golden shoes,” replied the Beetle. “Am I not just as good as that big creature yonder that is waited on and brushed, and has meat and drink put before him? Don’t I belong to the imperial stable?”

“But *why* is the horse to have golden shoes? Don’t you understand that?” asked the Smith.

“Understand? I understand that it is a personal slight offered to myself,” cried the Beetle. “It is done to annoy me, and therefore I am going into the world to seek my fortune.”

“Go along!” said the Smith.

“You’re a rude fellow!” cried the Beetle; and then he went out of the stable, flew a little way, and soon afterward found himself in a beautiful flower-garden all fragrant with roses and lavender.

“Is it not beautiful here?” asked one of the little Lady-birds that flew about with their delicate wings and their red-and-black shields on their backs. “How sweet it is here—how beautiful it is!”

“I’m accustomed to better things,” said the Beetle. “Do you call *this* beautiful? Why, there is not so much as a dung-heap.”

Then he went on under the shadow of a great stack and found a caterpillar crawling along.

“How beautiful the world is!” said the Caterpillar. “The sun is so warm, and everything so enjoyable! And when I go to sleep and die, as they call it, I shall wake up as a butterfly with beautiful wings to fly with.”

“How conceited you are!” exclaimed the Beetle. “*You* fly about as a butterfly, indeed! I’ve come out of the stable of the Emperor, and no one there, not even the Emperor’s favorite horse—that, by the way, wears my cast-off golden shoes—has any such idea. To have wings to fly! Why, we can fly now!” and he spread his wings and flew away. “I don’t want to be annoyed, and yet I am annoyed,” he said as he flew off.

Soon afterward he fell down upon a great lawn. For a while he lay there and feigned slumber; at last he fell asleep in earnest.

Suddenly a shower of rain came pattering from the clouds.

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The Beetle woke up at the noise and wanted to escape into the earth, but could not. He was tumbled over and over; sometimes he was swimming on his stomach, sometimes on his back, and as for flying, that was out of the question; he doubted whether he should escape from the place with his life. He therefore remained lying where he was.

When the weather had moderated a little and the Beetle had rubbed the water out of his eyes he saw something gleaming. It was linen that had been placed there to bleach. He managed to make his way up to it and crept into a fold of the damp linen. Certainly the place was not so comfortable to lie in as the warm stable; but there was no better to be had, and therefore he remained lying there for a whole day and a whole night, and the rain kept on during all the time. Toward morning he crept forth; he was very much out of temper about the climate.

On the linen two Frogs were sitting. Their bright eyes absolutely gleamed with pleasure.

"Wonderful weather, this!" one of them cried. "How refreshing! And the linen keeps the water together so beautifully. My hind legs seem to quiver as if I were going to swim."

"I should like to know," said the second, "if the swallow who flies so far round in her many journeys in foreign lands ever meets with a better climate than this. What delicious dampness! It is really as if one were lying in a wet ditch. Whoever does not rejoice in this certainly does not love his fatherland."

"Have you been in the Emperor's stable?" asked the Beetle. "There the dampness is warm and refreshing. That's the climate for me; but I cannot take it with me on my journey. Is there never a muck-heap here in the garden where a person of rank, like myself, can feel himself at home and take up his quarters?"

But the Frogs either did not or would not understand him.

"I never ask a question twice!" said the Beetle, after he had already asked this one three times without receiving any answer.

Then he went a little farther and stumbled against a fragment of pottery that certainly ought not to have been lying there;

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but, as it was once there, it gave a good shelter against wind and weather. Here dwelt several families of Earwigs; and these did not require much, only sociality. The female members of the community were full of the purest maternal affection, and, accordingly, each one considered her own child the most beautiful and clever of all.

“Our son has engaged himself,” said one mother. “Dear, innocent boy! His greatest hope is that he may creep one day into a clergyman’s ear. It’s very artless and lovable, that; and being engaged will keep him steady. What joy for a mother!”

“Our son,” said another mother, “had scarcely crept out of the egg when he was already off on his travels. He’s all life and spirits; he’ll run his horns off! What joy that is for a mother! Is it not so, Mr. Beetle?” for she knew the stranger by his horny coat.

“You are both quite right,” said he; so they begged him to walk in—that is to say, to come as far as he could under the bit of pottery.

“Now you also see *my* little Earwig,” observed a third mother and a fourth; “they are lovely little things and highly amusing. They are never ill-behaved except when they are uncomfortable in their inside; but, unfortunately, one is very subject to that at their age.”

Thus each mother spoke of her baby; and the babies talked among themselves, and made use of the little nippers they have in their tails to nip the beard of the Beetle.

“Yes, they are always busy about something, the little rogues!” said the mothers; and they quite beamed with maternal pride; but the Beetle felt bored by it, and therefore he inquired how far it was to the nearest muck-heap.

“That is quite out in the big world on the other side of the ditch,” answered an Earwig. “I hope none of my children will go so far, for it would be the death of me.”

“But *I* shall try to get so far,” said the Beetle; and he went off without taking formal leave, for that is considered the polite

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thing to do. And by the ditch he met several friends—beetles, all of them.

“Here we live,” they said. “We are very comfortable here. Might we ask you to step down into this rich mud? You must be fatigued after your journey.”

“Certainly,” replied the Beetle. “I have been exposed to the rain, and have had to lie upon linen, and cleanliness is a thing that greatly exhausts me. I have also pains in one of my wings from sitting in a draught under a fragment of pottery. It is really quite refreshing to be among one’s companions once more.”

“Perhaps you come from a muck-heap?” observed the oldest of them.

“Indeed, I come from a much higher place,” replied the Beetle. “I come from the Emperor’s stable, where I was born with golden shoes on my feet. I am traveling on a secret embassy. You must not ask me any questions, for I can’t betray my secret.”

With this the Beetle stepped down into the rich mud. There sat three young maiden Beetles; and they tittered because they did not know what to say.

“Not one of them is engaged yet,” said their mother; and the Beetle maidens tittered again, this time from embarrassment.

“I have never seen greater beauties in the royal stables,” exclaimed the Beetle, who was now resting himself.

“Don’t spoil my girls,” said the mother; “and don’t talk to them, please, unless you have serious intentions. But of course your intentions are serious, and therefore I give you my blessing.”

“Hurrah!” cried all the other Beetles together; and our friend was engaged. Immediately after the betrothal came the marriage, for there was no reason for delay.

The following day passed pleasantly, and the next in tolerable comfort; but on the third it was time to think of food for the wife, and perhaps for children.

“I have allowed myself to be taken in,” said our Beetle to himself. “And now there’s nothing for it but to take *them* in, in turn.”

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So said, so done. Away he went, and he stayed away all day, and stayed away all night; and his wife sat there, a forsaken widow.

“Oh,” said the other Beetles, “this fellow whom we received into our family is nothing more than a thorough vagabond. He has gone away and has left his wife a burden upon our hands.”

“Well, then, she shall be unmarried again and sit here among my daughters,” said the mother. “Fie on the villain who forsook her!”

In the mean time the Beetle had been journeying on and had sailed across the ditch on a cabbage-leaf. In the morning two persons came to the ditch. When they saw him they took him up and turned him over and looked very learned, especially one of them—a boy.

“Allah sees the black beetle in the black stone and in the black rock. Is not that written in the Koran?” Then he translated the Beetle’s name into Latin, and enlarged upon the creature’s nature and history. The second person, an older scholar, voted for carrying him home. He said they wanted just such good specimens; this seemed an uncivil speech to our Beetle, and in consequence he flew suddenly out of the speaker’s hand. As he now had dry wings, he flew a tolerable distance and reached a hotbed, where a sash of the glass roof was partly open, so he quietly slipped in and buried himself in the warm earth.

“Very comfortable it is here,” said he.

Soon after he went to sleep and dreamed that the Emperor’s favorite horse had fallen and had given him his golden shoes, with the promise that he should have two more.

That was all very charming. When the Beetle woke up he crept forth and looked around him. What splendor was in the hothouse! In the background great palm-trees growing up on high; the sun made them look transparent; and beneath them what a luxuriance of green, and of beaming flowers, red as fire, yellow as amber, or white as fresh-fallen snow!

“This is an incomparable plenty of plants,” cried the Beetle

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"How good they will taste when they are decayed! A capital store-room, this! There must certainly be relations of mine living here. I will just see if I can find any one with whom I may associate. I'm proud, certainly, and I'm proud of being so."

And so he prowled about in the earth and thought what a pleasant dream that was about the dying horse and the golden shoes he had inherited.

Suddenly a hand seized the Beetle and pressed him and turned him round and round.

The gardener's little son and a companion had come to the hotbed, had espied the Beetle, and wanted to have their fun with him. First he was wrapped in a vine-leaf and then put into warm trousers pocket. He cribbled and crabbed about there with all his might; but he got a good pressing from the boy's hand for this, which served as a hint to him to keep quiet. Then the boy went rapidly toward the great lake that lay at the end of the garden. Here the Beetle was put in an old broken wooden shoe, on which a little stick was placed upright for a mast, and to this mast the Beetle was bound with a woolen thread. Now he was a sailor and had to sail away.

The lake was not very large, but to the Beetle it seemed an ocean; and he was so astonished at its extent that he fell over on his back and kicked out with his legs.

The little ship sailed away. The current of the water seized it; but whenever it went too far from the shore one of the boys turned up his trousers and went in after it and brought it back to the land. But at length, just as it went merrily out again, the two boys were called away, and very harshly, so that they hurried to obey the summons, ran away from the lake, and left the little ship to its fate. Thus it drove away from the shore, farther and farther into the open sea; it was terrible work for the Beetle, for he could not get away in consequence of being bound to the mast.

Then a fly came and paid him a visit.

"What beautiful weather!" said the Fly. "I'll rest here and sun myself. You've an agreeable time of it."



BROUGHT THE BEETLE BACK

FAIRY TALES

“You speak without knowing the facts,” replied the Beetle. “Don’t you see that I’m a prisoner?”

“Ah! but I’m not a prisoner,” observed the Fly; and he flew away accordingly.

“Well, now I know the world,” said the Beetle to himself. “It is an abominable world. I’m the only honest person in it. First, they refuse me my golden shoes; then I have to lie on wet linen and to stand in the draught; and to crown all they fasten a wife upon me. Then, when I’ve taken a quick step out into the world and found out how one can have it there and how I wished to have it, one of these human boys comes and ties me up and leaves me to the mercy of the wild waves, while the Emperor’s favorite horse prances about proudly in golden shoes. That is what annoys me more than all. But one must not look for sympathy in this world! My career has been very interesting; but what’s the use of that if nobody knows it? The world does not deserve to be made acquainted with my history, for it ought to have given me golden shoes when the Emperor’s horse was shod, and I stretched out my feet to be shod, too. If I had received golden shoes I should have become an ornament to the stable. Now the stable has lost me and the world has lost me. It is all over!”

But all was not over yet. A boat, in which there were a few young girls, came rowing up.

“Look! yonder is an old wooden shoe sailing along,” said one of the girls.

“There’s a little creature bound fast to it,” said another.

The boat came quite close to our Beetle’s ship, and the young girls fished him out of the water. One of them drew a small pair of scissors from her pocket and cut the woolen thread without hurting the Beetle; and when she stepped on shore she put him down on the grass.

“Creep, creep—fly, fly—if thou canst,” she said. “Liberty is a splendid thing.”

And the Beetle flew up and straight through the open window of a great building; there he sank down, tired and exhausted,

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exactly on the mane of the Emperor's favorite horse, who stood in the stable when he was at home, and the Beetle also. The Beetle clung fast to the mane and sat there a short time to recover himself.

"Here I'm sitting on the Emperor's favorite horse—sitting on him just like the Emperor himself!" he cried. "But what was I saying? Yes, now I remember. That's a good thought, and quite correct. The Smith asked me why the golden shoes were given to the horse. Now I'm quite clear about the answer. They were given to the horse on *my* account."

And now the Beetle was in good temper again.

"Traveling expands the mind rarely," said he.

The sun's rays came streaming into the stable and shone upon him and made the place lively and bright.

"The world is not so bad, upon the whole," said the Beetle; "but one must know how to take things as they come."





XLIII

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THISTLE

AROUND the fine old mansion was a beautiful garden full of all kinds of rare trees and flowers; the guests, on a visit to the owner of all this, expressed their delight and admiration of the wonderful garden; the people from the country round about, and from the nearest town, used to come on Sundays and holidays and ask permission to see it; even whole schools made excursions to that place, merely for the purpose of seeing the garden.

Outside of the garden—by the fence that separated it from the meadow—stood an immense Thistle; an uncommonly large and fine thistle, with several branches spreading out just above the root, and altogether it was so strong and full as to make it well worthy of the name of thistle-bush. No one even noticed it save the old donkey that pulled the milk-cart for the dairy-maids; he stood grazing in the meadow hard by, and stretched his old neck to reach the thistle, saying: "You are beautiful! I should like to eat you!" but the tether was too short to admit of his reaching the Thistle, so that he did not eat it.

There was company staying at "the Hall"—fine, aristocratic relations from town—graceful, lovely girls, and among them a young lady who had come from "foreign parts," all the way

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from Scotland. She was of old and noble family, and rich in gold and lands; a bride well worth the winning, thought more than one of the young men, and their mothers thought so, too!

The young people were amusing themselves on the lawn playing croquet; they flitted about among the flowers, and each of the young girls gathered one and put it in one of the gentlemen's buttonholes; but the young Scotch lady looked all about for a flower, but none of them seemed to please her till all at once, happening to glance over the fence, she spied the fine large Thistle-bush standing there full of its bluish-red, healthy-looking flowers. She saw it and smiled, and begged the son of the house to get one of them for her.

"That is Scotland's flower," she said; "it grows and blossoms in our Arms; that flower give me."

And he gathered the finest of the thistle flowers, and pricked his fingers as much in doing so as if it had been growing on a wild rose-bush.

She took the flower and put it in his buttonhole, and he felt greatly honored thereby. Each of the other young men would gladly have given up his graceful garden flower if he might have worn the one given by the delicate hands of the Scotch girl. The son of the house felt the honor conferred upon him to be great, but the Thistle felt it still more; it seemed to feel dew and sunshine going through it!

"It seems I am of more consequence than I thought," it said to itself. "I ought by rights to stand inside, and not outside the fence; one gets strangely placed in this world. But now I have at least one of mine over the fence; and not only there, but in a buttonhole!"

To every bud that came and opened on the thistle-bush it told this great event; and not many days had passed before she heard—not from the people passing, nor yet from the twittering of little birds, but from the air, that treasures up and gives out sounds far and wide—from the most shady walks of the beautiful garden, as well as from the most distant rooms at "the Hall," where doors and windows were left open—that the young man

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who received the thistle flower from the graceful hands of the lovely Scottish maiden had now got her hand and heart as well. It was a fine couple and a "good match."

"That is *my* doing!" said the Thistle, thinking of the flower that it had given to the buttonhole. And every new flower that came was told of the wonderful event.

"Surely I shall be taken up and planted in the garden now!" thought the Thistle; "perhaps, even, I shall be put in a flower-pot as a 'clincher'—that is by far the most honorable position." And it thought of this so long that it ended by saying to itself, with the firm conviction of that being the truth, "I shall be planted in a flower-pot!"

It promised to every little bud that came that it also should be put in a pot, and perhaps even be promoted to a place in a buttonhole—that being the very highest one could aspire to—but, notwithstanding, none of them got into a flower-pot, and still less into a buttonhole.

They lived on light and air, and drank sunshine in the day and dew at night; received visits from bee and hornet, who came to look for the dower—the honey in the flower—and they took the honey but left the flower.

"The good-for-nothing fellows," said the Thistle-bush. "I wish I could pierce them as on a spit, but I cannot."

The flowers drooped and faded, but there always came new ones.

"You come as if you had been sent here," said the Thistle-bush to them. "I am expecting every moment to be taken over the fence."

A couple of harmless daisies and a huge, thin plant of canary-grass listened to this with deep respect and believed all they heard. The old donkey—that had to pull the milk-cart—cast longing looks toward the blooming thistle and tried to reach it; but his tether was too short! And the Thistle-bush thought and thought, so much and so long, of the Scotch thistle—to whom it believed itself related—till at last it fancied that *it* had come from Scotland and that it was its parents who had grown into the Scotch Arms.

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It was a great thought, but a great Thistle may well have great thoughts.

"Sometimes one is of such noble race that one may not know it," said the Nettle, growing close by—it had a kind of presentiment that it might be turned into muslin, if properly treated.

The summer passed, and the autumn passed; the leaves fell off the trees; the flowers came with stronger colors and less perfume; the gardener's lads sang on the other side of the fence:

"Up the hill, and down the hill,
That's the way of the world still."

The young pine-trees in the wood began to feel a longing for Christmas, but Christmas was a long way off yet!

"Here I am still," said the Thistle. "It seems that I am quite forgotten; and yet it was I who made the match! They were engaged, and now they are married—the wedding was a week ago. I do not make a single step forward—for I cannot."

Some weeks passed; the Thistle had its last solitary flower; large and full it was, and growing down near the root. The wind blew coldly over it, the color faded away, and all its gorgeousness disappeared, leaving only the cup of the flower, now as large as the flower of an artichoke and glistening like a silvered sunflower.

The young couple came along the garden path, and they were man and wife; they passed near the fence, and the bride, glancing over it, said: "Why, there stands the large thistle! It has no flowers now."

"Yes, there is still the ghost of one—of the last," said her husband, pointing to the silvery remains of the last flower—a flower in itself.

"How beautiful it is!" she said. "We must have such a one carved in the frame of our picture."

And once more the young man had to get over the fence to break off the silvery cup of the thistle flower. It pricked his fingers for his pains, because he had called it a *ghost*. And then it was brought into the garden, and to "the Hall," and into the drawing-room. There stood a large picture—the portraits of

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the young couple; in the bridegroom's buttonhole was painted a thistle, and they talked of it, and of the flower-cup they brought in with them—the last, now silver-shimmering thistle flower, that was to be imitated in the carving of the frame.

And the air took all their words and scattered them about far and wide.

“What strange things happen to one,” said the Thistle-bush. “My first-born went to live in a buttonhole; my last-born in a frame! I wonder what is to become of me?”

And the old donkey, standing by the roadside, cast sidelong and loving glances at the Thistle, and said: “Come to me, my sweetheart, for I cannot go to you—my tether is too short!”

But the Thistle-bush made no answer. It grew more and more thoughtful, and it thought as far ahead as Christmas, till its budding thoughts opened into flower.

“When one's children are safely housed, a mother is quite content to remain beyond the fence in the cold!”

“That is a most respectable thought,” said the Sunshine; “and never fear but you also shall be well placed.”

“In a flower-pot or in a frame?” asked the Thistle.

“In a story,” answered the Sunshine.

And here it is!



THE END

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